

# AROUND KEYNSHAM & SALTFOED PAST AND PRESENT



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Cover illustration;

Horses and carts await their owners outside the Talbot Inn on Bath Road pre-1894

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[www.keysalthist.org.uk](http://www.keysalthist.org.uk)

## KEYNSHAM & SALTFORD

### PAST & PRESENT

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## NOTES FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Once again, we have had a year severely affected by the formal restrictions of the coronavirus pandemic, followed by a period of voluntary restraint. However, the Society succeeded in running a complete programme of talks through the 2021/2022 session and I am grateful for the support of all those who attended them. Through the commitment of committee members, our programme of summer visits has returned to its usual format and we are running several public walks in Keynsham. Let's hope normality continues! One of the Society's aims is to encourage interest in local history among the wider community. In the past we have contributed ideas and knowledge to projects associated with the redevelopment of the Town Hall area, and over the last year we have been involved in various aspects of the current Keynsham High Street cultural programme and in pressing for local history references to be incorporated in the forthcoming improvements to Temple Street. I am hopeful that gradually we will raise awareness of both Keynsham Abbey and the history of the various mills in Keynsham.

In relation to the latter, some of you will know that Joan Day, who died in 2019, generously left the Society a significant sum in her will. Bearing in mind the enormous contribution Joan made to understanding the history of the local brass industry and in ensuring the survival of the remains of the Saltford Brass Mill, your committee decided that it would be appropriate to use this to devise a trail of some kind around local sites of significance in the industry. I am pleased to say that work in preparing this is now underway and is being done in partnership with the Saltford Brass Mill Project, which will both enhance the content and credibility of the project and help to reach a wider audience. It is our aim that this project will reach fruition by this time next year. One of our mills also features in a piece in this journal on the Shallard

Steel Works – at Steel Mills - summarising new research by one of our members.

Other articles, researched by our editor, Brian Vowles, and others, cover a wide variety of topics, including local involvement in the Slave Trade, aspects of life in Victorian times and several accounts of life in the Second World War.

These pages also include an obituary for Elizabeth White, who died in February, but I will take this opportunity to pay tribute to her, as one of the leading lights of the Society for many years. Elizabeth made a huge contribution to the committee and the Society's work from the time she moved to the town. Her greatest achievement, which must have taken a great deal of time and effort, was in partially writing and in editing "Keynsham & Saltford, Life & Work in Times Past", which is the standard book on the history of this area and a legacy of which any local historian would be proud. Planning our next series of talks is well under way as I write, and we intend that these will once again include refreshments and the opportunity for social mixing. I look forward to the programme and to meeting new and returning members. I hope you enjoy this issue of our journal and our forthcoming activities.



Richard Dyson

Chairman

## **Anne Victoria Gwendolen Wills (1872-1949)**

Carrying on the Wills Family Tradition of Public Duty and Philanthropy.

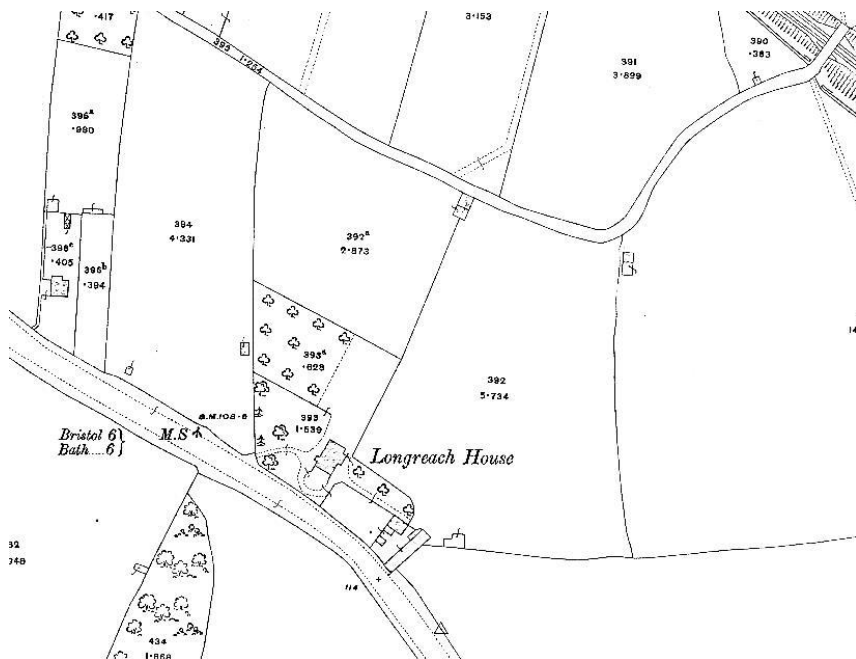
By Jane Bambury. (Jane is volunteer researcher at Arnos Vale Cemetery. Ed.)

Gwendolen Wills was a granddaughter of Henry Overton Wills II (the H.O. of WD & HO Wills of the tobacco family). She was born Anne Victoria Gwendolen in Stratford in Wiltshire on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1872. Her parents were Stephen Prust Wills (the eldest son of H. O. Wills II and his second wife, Mary Seccombe) and his wife, Annie, née Roberts. In total, Henry Overton fathered some eighteen children, giving rise to copious well attended family events, frequently reported in the papers.

One of the earliest where she was mentioned was when she was twenty-nine; the marriage of one of her sisters, Evelyn, in London. The seven bridesmaids included Gwendolen and the other two sisters. Their outfits were described: *'They were charmingly gowned in white crepe voile, over glace silk fichus and deep flounces of accordion pleated chiffon, with insertion of cream lace and long white chiffon sashes from the shoulder, with Empire belts of emerald silk. They also wore large black picture hats with sprays of pink roses and black velvet bows, and nose-gays of shaded roses en-suite. The bridegroom's presents to them were unique gold bracelets.* The report was two thirds of a column long and liberally sprinkled with the Wills surname.

Stephen, initially in the family firm, was a carpet agent and stockbroker. The family moved around the country, before settling in Abbey Park, in Keynsham, on his retirement. In the censuses with her family, Anne was referred to as Annie, but by the time she had grown up, she was Gwendolen. Her parents died in 1915 and 1922, and are buried in Keynsham Cemetery.

Stephen left £2,172 at probate. A few years later Gwendolen took possession of Longreach House on the Bath Road between Keynsham and Saltford, which had been put up for auction in February 1928. It had three reception rooms, six bedrooms, pantry, larder, kitchens, offices, electricity and water. The 2  $\frac{3}{4}$  acres had gardens, a tennis lawn, shrubbery, and orchard, with outbuildings for cars and livestock.



Like many in the Wills family, despite their wealth, Gwendolen earned her own living. Sometime during the 1890s she trained to be a nurse at University College Hospital, St Pancras, London, appearing as a hospital nurse there in 1901. She received her certificate as a member of the Queen's Nursing Institute in 1903.

By 1911 she had become matron of Her Majesty's Hospital for sick children in Stepney Causeway, London, which was established by Dr Barnardo. As Matron, she was responsible for filling in the census schedule for a staff of one resident medical officer, three trained nurses, one lady student nurse, thirteen hospital nurses, one cook, two servants, and fifty-four patients whose ages ranged from one to twenty; some of the older boys were being trained in various trades. She became a member of the College of Nursing in 1917, and registered when the Registration Act was passed in 1919, appearing in the Register until 1923.

Once retired, she started to become more involved in a large range of interests, many round her career in nursing. A couple of early reports in 1916, and 1919, found her attending fund-raising affairs for Dr Barnardo's, as ex-matron, and the Young Helpers League. At the latter, she gave an account of her four delightful years as matron, and the work of the institution, ending with an appeal for funds, that 'starved and wasted babies might learn to smile and enjoy some of the joys of childhood'.

January 1918 saw the beginning of a major interest when Keynsham formed its own branch of the new Women's Institute movement, and Gwendolen was invited to be their President, a post she held until her death. They started with 43 members, which by 1921 had grown to 233, and met in the schoolroom of the Baptist Chapel. In June that year they acquired their own premises, a wood & corrugated iron structure on brick foundation, situated near the Public Hall (which became the Drill Hall). It comprised a tastefully decorated hall, with kitchen & cloakroom, electric lighting and lined with matching boarding and asbestos, and a system of ventilation, all courtesy of Mr C Willcox towards which the WI had raised £320 of the £500 cost. Mr Vaughan & Mr Willis provided and fitted lighting and fittings, free of charge.



She was a generous president, and in 1925 arranged for about 130 members to visit Bristol University, after which she and Miss Bowering (vice-president) entertained them to tea at the Queen's café. Over the years, she attended many meetings of surrounding WI and other groups, often regaling them with stories of her trips around the world, which were in 1930 & 1935 according to the passenger lists.

In 1935, Brislington WI heard about her tour through Canada, while in 1936, Temple Cloud and Keynsham WIs were both given a talk *From New York to Fiji* in July, with photographs and pictures. (I'm sorry to recount these events; I know how much we have all missed our meetings and talks this past year and a half!); 1937 saw her give Hinton Blewett and Pensford & Publow WIs talks on Java and Bali respectively. The next year, Keynsham received a talk on the journey home from Java, while Dundry WI found she gave 'such an interesting account of her journey from New York to San Francisco' that their members requested a talk on the next stage to New Zealand, which she promised to do the next spring. Chew Stoke enjoyed the pictures from their talk. In 1939, she must have visited Europe as she missed the January Keynsham WI meeting, and in February, she gave them talk on her visit to Holland & Germany by Airship.

A bit more detail was given in the Bath Chronicle in November 1936, when, as vice-chair of the Bath and West Ladies Club she gave a talk (and paid for the tea). The paper reported the subject was her world tour in 1935 taken with members of the BMA. Miss Wills unhesitatingly described the great grey mass of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, with its three steel spans as a 'monstrosity' when contrasted with the natural beauties of the famous harbour. The residents of Melbourne regarded themselves as 'the hub of the universe'; while in Sydney the Cockney accent was still dominant. She described Bali, its inhabitants, their

religions, culture and way of life, and she showed various souvenirs she had brought back.

Other topics she gave talks on were home nursing, the psychology of childhood and the correct procedures in a law court, and in other meetings, Keynsham WI held discussions on such matters as 'Should married women earn?' The anniversaries of the KWI were celebrated with a tea party, sometimes held in the garden of Longreach House.

Politics was another area of her very busy life. She was an active member of the Frome Division of the Conservative and Unionist Party, attended the meetings, proposing and seconding candidates, and giving campaign speeches the 1923, 1924 & 1929 elections. There was much emphasis on encouraging political interest amongst women, especially once all women over 21 were able to vote in 1928. She became chair of the Keynsham branch in 1930. And again, functions and meetings were often held at Longreach.

In local politics she stood in 1924, as one of two women in eleven candidates for three seats in Keynsham Rural District Council. On 7<sup>th</sup> April she was elected with the highest number of votes 498, the next one being 342. Women had of course (subject to certain restrictions), been able to stand and vote in local and parish councils, school boards and poor law boards since around the 1890s, one of the many unsung achievements by the various non-militant suffrage societies eventually led by Millicent Fawcett, all of which were imperative milestones on the road to full voting rights.

Her first council meeting dealt with such issues as the renaming of Chewton Road to 'Wellsway', as more useful to the users of the road, and the name Chewton was applied from the

turning down to Chewton. Other matters over the years in which she contributed to the discussions were the proposed recreation ground in 1926, for mothers and prams and small children; problems of providing decent housing for the lower paid such as agricultural workers, and she corroborated that there were still three or four families in one house in Compton Dando. One newspaper report finished with *'The inquiry was then adjourned until tomorrow morning. Either the Drill Hall or the schools next door will be available and the Town Crier will be sent round tonight to notify the Parishioners.'* I wonder when that practice ceased!

On another occasion, after the council received notice of a Rural Housing Conference to be held in the December, at Salisbury, Gwendolen said that in her opinion 'such conferences did not accomplish much'. In July 1930 she insisted on having multiple traps for tenants to catch cockroaches, and the paper commented 'where there are Wills there are ways'. She held her seat when it came up for re-election, and later, when Keynsham merged with Bath RDC in 1933, she stood and was elected for Bathavon RDC. She served on that until 1943.

Not content with these posts it would appear, in 1930, she was sworn in as a County Magistrate for Somerset, serving until her death.

She seemed keen to keep up with technology and progress, and owned a car, however it seems she was not always a model citizen and in April 1927, Gwendolen was summoned to the Bath City Police Court for causing an obstruction in Milsom Street by leaving her car there for thirty minutes. She expressed regret, and told the Bench that the Bath motor parks were full when she drew up in her small Austin car. PC Sims gave evidence and the Bench dismissed the case on payment of costs

Later in June 1928 she joined the list of subscribers to the new telephone service as Saltford 36. She was a keen gardener, and livestock owner, winning prizes for poultry, and the ‘fat sow’ entries. The National Garden Scheme was started in 1927 to raise funds for the Queen’s Nursing Institute, and Gwendolen was one of the many home owners who opened their gardens to the public, as on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1940 a notice appeared, announced that Longreach garden would not open as advertised due to war situation. The admission would have been 6d.

Although she had retired from nursing, she became actively involved in many organisations connected with care in the community - her obituary said she was one of Keynsham’s most prominent social workers. Various posts mentioned include: chair of the Keynsham Hospital Management Board, vice-chair of Keynsham Out-Relief Union (1925), and vice-chair Keynsham board guardians (1927). After her Christmas Day visit to Keynsham Workhouse in 1928, she reported that the residents were enjoying the new radio. She was also vice-chair (1937), then chairman of the Frome Area Guardians committee. She was President of the Keynsham Branch of Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen’s Families Assoc. She even found time to sell poppies, at the Guildhall in Bath 1928.

There were also many specifically nursing interests. They included being secretary to the Keynsham and Saltford Nursing Association for 25 years, and in 1938, she talked to Kingswood NA about her experiences as a trained nurse. In 1934 she held the chair of the newly created Bath & West Club, which had started in 1931 as the Bath Nurses Club – it was now open to all women. She also had quite an involvement with the Bristol Maternity Hospital and Temporary Home, which had beds for unmarried mothers. It was then in Southwell Road just off St Michael’s Hill. She was a member of the executive committee, becoming its chair

by 1944. In 1934, the annual report noted the yearly increase in births, and that they had helped 16 unmarried mothers. However, the hospital needed larger premises, so that all maternity cases could be seen in one dedicated place. This would avoid the risk, in the general wards of other institutions, of cross contamination and disease. Two years later, Gwendolen made an appeal on the radio for funds to open a new hospital with 100 beds.

She opened copious fêtes, fairs and exhibitions in Bristol, Bath and North Somerset, as well as being a stall holder at some of them, and appears to have been very popular. Many of these were raising funds for, or on behalf of, such things as the girl guides, church appeals, women's hostels, Sunday schools, home and foreign missions, a van for People's dispensary for sick animals of the poor, the BMH and disabled servicemen. They reflected her interests in Dr Barnardo's, health, education, arts and crafts, and women's matters.

The Allied Craftsmen, incorporating Mendip Workers, exhibited annually at the Victoria Rooms, and when she opened the week-long event in 1938, she said she ' marvelled at the great beauty and art displayed there'. She was presented with a hand painted tray.

At the opening of the Clutton 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Horticultural show, in August 1939, she explained 'she always liked to come to a show of this kind, which was a great factor in the life of the countryside. It brought them all together in a spirit of happiness and helped them, for a few months at least, to forget the anxious times through which they were passing.'



Gwendolen Wills being presented with a hand painted tray by the Allied Craftsmen at the Victoria Rooms in 1938

When Keynsham needed a cinema, she became Chairman of the Board which funded and built it, and it opened in 1936. (See Brian Vowles's article, K&SLHS 2016 issue)

The Church was equally important. She served on Keynsham Church Council and as one of the managers of the Keynsham Parochial Schools. She took an interest in the non-Conformist church affairs as well. A Memorial Plaque to her is in St John's.



She died in St Brenda's Nursing Home in Clifton on 12 December 1949, having opened the Xmas fair at the Victoria Methodist Sunday School in Kingswood a week before. She was cremated at Arno's Vale Cemetery two days later. Her remains were scattered in the Garden of Rest. There was a Memorial Service in Keynsham on the 15<sup>th</sup>, and Princess Marie Louise, a granddaughter of Queen Victoria, who was a supporter of district nursing, sent a floral tribute. Gwen left £21,258 3s 5d.

In the October after her death, Keynsham WI held a special annual meeting, inviting presidents of the surrounding WI groups. They unveiled an oak table, a memorial to Gwendolen. It was noted that 'Miss Wills had accepted the role of President, but not just as a mere figurehead. They felt they must have a memorial to her, as a token of their love and admiration for her; her amazing courage; and their gratitude for all she had done for the WI'.

## Sources

Ancestry – censuses, nursing records, passenger lists, probate  
Find my Past – British Library Newspapers, incl. Western Daily  
Press, Bath Chronicle, Shepton Mallett Journal, Taunton  
Chronicle, Somerset Standard, Wells Journal, Somerset Gazette  
Find a Grave  
Know Your Place

Note; Following Miss Wills' death Longreach was acquired by Horace Batchelor. He was best known during the 1950s and 1960s as an advertiser on Radio Luxembourg. He advertised a way to win money by predicting the results of football matches and his spelling out of K-e-y-n-s-h-a-m made the town famous. After his death it became a nursing home but later was converted into flats (Ed.).

## **Tough Justice - Frome Times - Wednesday 13 February 1878**

KEYNSHAM. Pauper's Life - On Wednesday, a pauper named Emma King was brought before the magistrates, charged with being refractory (resisting control or authority) and was sent to Shepton Mallet Gaol for fourteen days. It is the custom for all persons convicted of offences to walk to Shepton Mallet, a distance of about twenty miles. In this case the woman had infant of about eighteen months; but, notwithstanding this, the rule referred was adhered to, and she was obliged to tramp the whole distance with the child in her arms. On arriving at the gaol, the governor refused to admit the child, as it was not included in the warrant, and the officer charge (P.,C Baker) was ordered to take it back to the Keynsham Union. This he did, after having been left in sole charge of the unfortunate infant for nearly nine hours. In justice to the officer, it should be added that he duly attended to the infant's wants and necessities, and on arriving at the Union it appeared be very loth to be separated from its sturdy protector.



## **A Casualty of WW2**

by Brian Vowles

In 2020 we commemorated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of V.E. Day and the end of WW2. Memories of the casualties of that conflict were renewed and in particular the death of one young Keynsham lad in 1944 for whom the cessation of hostilities came too late.

He was Reggie Exon, the son of dairyman Herbert Exon whose business was run from premises opposite the church and who was destined to inherit his father's business. Born in 1922, Reggie attended Bristol Grammar School, sang in the choir at St. John's Church and was a member of the Boy Scouts. He excelled at sport and after leaving school he joined the staff of Fry's Chocolate Factory at Somerdale and there, in 1939, he won the Boy's Cup at the Sports Day organised by the Fry's Club.

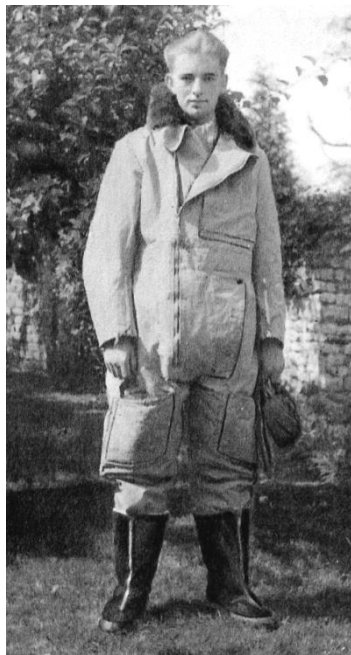
When the Air Training Corps was formed, Reggie was one of the first eager volunteers to join the No. 37F (1st City of Bristol) Squadron. On 18 November 1940, No. 270 Cadet Exon was transferred to 'A' Flight and he was still a member in February 1941 when he enrolled in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Then on reaching his 18th birthday he was drafted directly into the R.A.F.

His training commenced on 28 October 1942. At the height of the U-boat menace, Reggie embarked at Cardiff docks on the White Star cargo vessel the S.S.Cavina for the perilous crossing of the Atlantic to the port of Halifax in Canada. There he attended Course No. 9 for Air Gunners at No.34 Operational Training Unit, Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick starting on 23 March. He then went on to receive his air gunner's badge at the bombing and gunnery school at Mont Joli in Quebec.

On his return to England in December 1943, he was posted to No.180 Squadron, which was based at R.A.F. Dunsford, part of No.139 Airfield under the command of the 2nd Tactical Air Force. Although initially under Bomber Command, the unit had been created to perform bombing missions in preparation for and after the D-Day invasion with night intruder raids over Normandy. No.180 Squadron was equipped with B25 (Mitchell II) light bombers manned by a 4/5-man crew, the RAF being the only force to use the B-25 on raids against Europe from bases in the United Kingdom.

Reggie's crew, led by pilot Flying Officer George Struthers, a New Zealander, flew several uneventful "ops" before their aircraft FL689 was badly damaged during an attack on Livossart (a flying bomb site in the Pas-de-Calais in northern France) on 9 February 1944. The aircraft was hit under the port wing by heavy anti-aircraft fire; the engine was rendered unserviceable and large holes were torn in the wing.

Although wounded, F/O Struthers managed to nurse the stricken aircraft back over the channel to try to land at RAF Friston which was situated on the cliff top in Sussex. While attempting to make an emergency landing however, the disturbance of the airflow caused by putting down the undercarriage made the aircraft uncontrollable and Flying



Reggie in his flying suit in the dairy's garden behind the High Street

Officer Struthers found that they were heading straight for a row of cottages. By a supreme effort he, with the assistance of his navigator, managed to lift the aircraft over the cottages, but in doing so it struck some high-tension cables and burst into flames. He undoubtedly saved many lives at the cost of severe injuries to himself and was awarded the D.F.C. Flying Officer Struthers survived but the wireless operator/air gunner, W/O David Charles Hammond R.N.Z.A.F., died in the crash. Reggie also survived but suffered burns and lost much of his body hair. After recovering from his injuries he returned to operations on 10 May 1944 but by then he must have been aware that his chances of survival were limited.

The crew then went on to complete 16 missions of the 40 required between that day and 30 June (aborted mission were not counted). Their targets were the heavily defended V1 sites, marshalling yards and other lines of communication prior to D-Day.

A friend of his, Monty Veale, remembered meeting up with Reggie on one of his leaves in June 1944 and they started out from the Talbot to do a round of the local pubs where they spent an “unusually hectic evening”. As he said - *“there was an intensity about it which is hard to explain but they were living for the day!”* That was the last drink the friends had together.

Then came the fateful entry in the Operations Log of No.180 squadron...

*30 June 1944, Mitchell FW169 - Take off for Feuquerolles – Amaye - St. Andre – Fleury at 01.45. Hit trees just after take-off, crashing at Fisher Lane, Chiddingfold, Surrey. All the crew were killed.*

On that night a flight of three B-25s (Mitchell Bomber Mark II) was detailed to take part in a bombing mission against

an enemy tank concentration at Thury-Harcourt in Normandy with the aim of preventing its movement through the town to counter attack the British invasion force. The first aircraft FW.113 took off at 1:10am to be followed 10 minutes later by the second, FW.240. The third, FW.169 in which the 22-year-old was acting as the air gunner, made a normal take off at 01:45 hrs in patchy ground mist and slight haze.

On board were its five-man international crew, F/O (Pilot) George Struthers DFC RNZA, F/O (Nav.) Alexander McLachlan RAFVR, F/Sgt (W.Op./Air Gnr.) and P/O (Pilot) Ieuan (Rex) Haddock RCAF (of New York City, USA) who had replaced the previous wireless operator/air gunner, W/O David Charles Hammond R.N.Z.A.F, who had been killed in the earlier crash. In addition to Reggie a fifth member F/Sgt Thomas Rook RAFVR had also joined the crew as a spare gunner for the first time. Inexplicably the Mitchell began turning sharply below safety height and moments later clipped some 35-foot-high trees at the aptly named Butcher's Copse near Chiddingfold, 4 miles west of Dunsford in Sussex. Cart-wheeling into the ground, it burst into flames with a full tank of fuel and bomb load. Of the five-man international crew, Struthers, McLachlan and Rook were killed instantly. Haddock bailed out but he hit the ground before his parachute opened. When the ambulance reached the crash site only F/Sgt (Air Gnr.) Reginald Exon RAFVR was found to be still alive in the wreckage but terribly injured. Sadly, he died before reaching the hospital.

His body was returned to Keynsham but the rest of the crew were buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery. The accident report concluded that... *"possibly the pilots indicator finder was at fault, which raised doubts about the positional locking of the de-icer shut off valve, which in turn possibly caused the failure of the altimeter, turn and bank instrument and directional gyro"*.

Reggie's death must have come as a terrible shock to Herbert and his wife Mary and when his remains were returned to his grieving parents, they buried him in Keynsham Cemetery on 5 July 1944.

His sister Doreen who died in 2012, was serving in the ATS at the time, told me that to attend the funeral she had to apply for leave from her Commanding Officer and she was granted just two days to travel down to Keynsham, to witness the burial and to return to Donnington! Unfortunately, there was some delay with the return of Reggie's body and she had to apply for a further two-day extension, which was very reluctantly given. Such were the rigid restrictions of war-time Britain.

Herbert never really recovered from this tragedy.

## DUTY TILL DEATH C.O.'s Tribute to West Airman

A striking tribute to a 22-years-old Somerset airman, Flt.-Sergt. Reginald Herbert Exon, who was killed during operations, has been received from his commanding officer by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Exon, of Keynsham.

In a letter expressing sympathy with them he writes: "In the air and on the ground he was devoted to duty and was a member of one of the finest



Flt.-Sgt. Exon

crews in the squadron. "His sacrifice will be an inspiration to us all to continue in the fight for the peace and happiness of the world." Flight-Sergt. Exon was educated at Bristol Grammar School, and

when he volunteered for the R.A.F. was on the staff of Messrs. J. S. Fry and Sons.

When the A.T.C. was formed he was one of the first lads to join the Bristol squadron. He was an all-round sportsman and held the Junior Sports Championship Cup at Fry's in 1939.

His sister, Miss Doreen M. Exon, is in the A.T.S.

The report of Reggie's funeral in the Western Daily Press on 7th July 1944

## **The Wellington Bomber Crash**

By Brian Vowles.

Herbert Exon was still grieving for his lost 22-year-old son Reggie who had died on 30 June 1944 when two months later on the morning of 26 August 1944 as he walked through the orchard at the rear of his dairy on the High Street, he came across a horrific scene. There, speared on bean poles, was the body of an airman tangled in his unopened parachute. There were still some signs of life and Herbert hurriedly contacted Dr. Claude Harrison who rushed to get his case from his near-by surgery but, by the time he returned, the airman had slipped away. It subsequently transpired he was Sgt William Hankin aged just 20, a trainee wireless operator. He had been one of the crew of a Wellington Bomber that had crashed at Uplands on the Wellsway at 01.46 a.m. earlier that morning and was one of the two who managed to bail out but their parachutes failed to open. The other was Sgt David Evans (19) who was found hanging from trees in woods at Hencliffe Woods, Hanham but the disintegrated remains of his parachute were found one mile away. It is thought he opened his parachute prematurely and the cords became entangled in the aircraft's wheels. For some years later local people placed a wreath at the foot of the tree but that little act of remembrance has since lapsed.

The rest of the six-man crew perished in the burning plane and it was the same Dr. Harrison who, called to the tragedy, had the grisly task of picking up the human remains and placing them in an opened parachute.

A Royal Observer Corps post saw two yellow 'colours of the day' as the aircraft struck the ground at high speed; the engines were buried to a depth of twelve feet and burning wreckage was scattered over a wide area setting Uplands Wood on fire.



The aircrew who died at Uplands came from Britain and the Commonwealth.

Left to right – Trainee air-gunner Sgt Alwyn Blewett (19) from Rhymney, Trainee bomb-aimer Sgt Frank Martin (28) from Kent, Pilot W.O. John Harvey RNZAF (23) from Auckland and Trainee navigator Sgt Don Patterson RCAF (20) from Toronto.

The Keynsham U.D.C. Log book for the Keynsham Fire Brigade recorded the fatal crash of the Wellington Bomber and described the scene. At 1.52a.m. they received an alarm call reporting the crash and the first fire engine left within minutes to arrive at the site at 2.02 a.m. There they found the wreckage of an aircraft that had crashed into the hillside at Uplands ablaze with exploding ammunition. A search was made but no rescue was possible and three dead bodies were recovered; a fourth was discovered later. A second appliance was ordered to attend at 2.15 and a hose laid down to the River Chew. The fire which had spread to nearby trees was then extinguished but the men stood by until relief crews arrived at 6.30 a.m. making it possible for the first appliance to return to Keynsham by 6.40 a.m. The two new crews stood by until the incident closed at 1.35 p.m. enabling the second Keynsham crew to return to their own station.

An account of the incident was given in a local newspaper on 30 March 1990...

*The Wellington Bomber took off from Chipping Warden, Northants at 22.09 hrs. on 26 August 1944, on a diversionary flight to be followed by a 'bulls-eye' exercise over Bristol at a height of 17,000 ft. The flight involved flying over the North Sea and approaching Bristol from the North-East. The crew had been*

*briefed to maintain radio silence except for a message when recrossing the English Coast. This was duly carried out and a brief message, 'Crossing the coast' was received at 0020hrs. An hour and twenty-seven minutes later, the aircraft struck the ground almost vertically at high speed at Uplands Farm. The weather was good and the official accident report noted the 'wind as 2 m.p.h. West, visibility 3 miles, no cloud, icing negligible and a slight ground haze.*

An official inquiry conducted by Bomber Command was unable to establish the cause of the crash and the whole tragedy remains a mystery. The site was excavated during the 1980s by some enthusiasts using a JCB. Parts of the starboard engine (now displayed in the library) were found 6-7 feet down along with ammunition boxes containing 2,000 rounds. The rest of the engine was so far down it was simply covered up again.

Fifty years after the crash a memorial service was held at the site on August 26 1994 when a crowd of nearly a hundred gathered to pay their respects. Organised by the Keynsham British Legion, the Rev. Simon Stevenette conducted a short service and six ATC cadets read out the names of the fallen.



The Memorial Service at Uplands in 1994



## **Keynsham's First Flower Show.**

By Brian Vowles.

In the latter part of the 19thC Keynsham was still a rural village quite separate from Bristol or Bath and which, apart from the traders in the High Street, was largely dominated by agriculture. This was the main source of employment for men who laboured under almost feudal conditions and women who often earned money by picking the stones from the fields or working in dairies for example. It was the fashion for the wealthier ranks of society to exhibit their affluence by adorning their grounds with the elaborate geometric beds of flowers and/or producing exotic fruits, melons, grapes etc. in their heated greenhouses (which obviously necessitated the employment of teams of fulltime gardeners).

With the arrival of high summer, it was the custom of many of the surrounding communities to mount flower shows. Not to be outdone Keynsham formed a committee to arrange its own event - little suspecting that it was destined to become one of the most popular in the west of England.

After only three months preparation plans were made for it to take place on 25 August 1869. Promoted by the Honorary Secretary of the Keynsham Horticultural Society Mr T Jeffreys, among its sponsors were the big local landowners Mr Gore-Langton M.P. of Newton Park and the lord of Keynsham Manor Mr Harford Lynne. Other 'gentry' living in the neighbourhood giving their support were Messrs. Lean, Ireland, Mynors, King, Proctor-Baker, Somerville, Hurte and Fox.

The location of the showground was a field with an entrance off Dane's Lane (later to be renamed Charlton Road)

owned by a Mr Sheppard and the exhibits were displayed in a large marquee. At the entrance of the tent stood a decorated statue of the goddess “Flora” and a sheaf of wheat bearing the inscription...

“Good luck to the hoof and the horn,  
Good luck to the hock and the fleece,  
Good luck to the growers of corn,  
With the blessings of plenty and peace.”



This was not the only floral embellishment as the villagers treated the day as a general holiday, adorning many properties with garlands and slogans that could have come from the pages of a Thomas Hardy novel. At the entrance to Dane’s Lane a carpenter, Mr. Belsten, erected an archway of evergreens bearing the exhortation “*Success to the Keynsham Flower Show*”, the lettering being composed of daisies arranged by a Miss Stokes. Further on up the lane Mr Belsten erected another arch bearing the message “*Loyal in everything*”.

The Railway Station was elaborately decorated and across the tracks was suspended a festoon of evergreens carrying the motto “*Labour conquers all things*” and both up and down platforms were bedecked with ornamental trees interspersed with various other mottoes. The entrances to the station were spanned with floral archways and trimmed with Chinese lanterns and flags. On the road leading to the village there were numerous other decorations. A festoon of evergreen and flowers bearing a crown, “*V.R.*” and “*Welcome*” was stretched across from the Oddfellows Arms (until recently the Pioneer) and near the church the painter Mr Harvey and bootmaker Mr Pocock erected an arch of evergreens and lanterns and decorated their houses with the slogans “*Success to our first floral fete*” and “*Effort deserves success*”.

A row of streamers was suspended from the church tower and its bells rang peals throughout the day. Nearby, Mr Hooper's Railway Tavern (now an estate agent's) was decorated, as was the Royal Oak (now the Wine Bar), The Forester's Arms (now a clothes shop) and the Freeman's Arms. A row of flags ran across the road opposite Mr Fear's shop and between the windows of Mr Keates and Mr Coles were two strings of foliage and the motto "*Success to the Keynsham Flower Show*". The porch of the Lamb and Lark was adorned with fir trees and a row of flags crossed the street in front of the hostelry. The landlord of the Wheatsheaf in Temple Street showed a real sheaf of wheat and several apple boughs over his doorway and the Crown on Bristol Road was decorated with shrubbery, as were the Almshouses opposite.

An attractive collection of plants for display only was provided by the sponsors. Mr. Gore-Langton sent from his estate at Newton some splendidly grown orange, lemon and other citrus trees as well as other fine hot-house plants. Amongst others, Mr King of Brislington also sent some splendid plants, Mr Drummond a nurseryman from Bath some fuchsias and Mr Mynors a collection of flowers. Rev.Pratt, the Baptist minister and chairman of the committee, sent some luscious looking plums and currants and Mr Paplin of Queen Charlton donated some exceedingly well-grown swedes and mangold wurzels.

In the centre of the show tent was an elaborate feature which won first prize for a Miss Jefferys. Consisting of a group of archers, several figures, whose dresses were composed of leaves and flowers, were shown in the act of shooting at targets with a pool of water enriching the composition for good measure. She also contributed a bird cage made of straw with a bird made of flowers.

The prizes, for the flowers and vegetables, were arranged in two classes, one for amateurs or their gardeners and another for cottagers. Both were presented to the winners by Mr Jeffreys that evening. The judges were Mr Morse gardener to Mr Proctor-Baker of Brislington; Mr Mould, gardener to Mr Simpkins of Weston Park, Bath; and Mr Keel gardener to Mr Gore-Langton of Newton Park.



The decorated gateway to the Lamb & Lark Hotel for a later show.

It was estimated that over 2000 attended the show in all. Local ladies and gentry from the neighbourhood attended between 2 o'clock and 4 o'clock but when the price of admission was reduced at 4 o'clock and again at 5 o'clock there was a large increase in the numbers of the lower classes. Many visitors came from Bristol possibly attracted by a special train excursion which left Temple Meads at 1. 25p.m. with return tickets for parties of ten and upwards costing 6d. and 4½d. each.

Their enjoyment was enhanced during the afternoon by music from Mr T. Weymouth's. Brislington brass band, and the Keynsham Rifle Corps drum and fife band, under the leadership of Mr W. Phelps. As the weather was quite hot and oppressive Mr Huntley of St. Augustine's Parade did a roaring trade in cooling drinks and ices before the show closed at 7 o'clock.

Keynsham 41st Annual Flower Show 1929

## THE SHOW OF THE WEST

August Bank Holiday, Monday & Tuesday, 5th & 6th.

Number of Entries for 1928	-	<b>1,085</b>
Attendance	-	<b>15,151</b>
Prize Money Offered	-	<b>£350</b>

Special attention is called to the extension of the area  
for Cottagers and Amateurs →

Latest Music for Dancing, and Novelties  
will be supplied by  
Badman's Marconiphone Amplifiers both days.

*The most Efficient and Up-to-date. Come and Listen to the Best Music.*

**Dance and Enjoy yourselves!!!**

Advert for the 1929 show indicating its growth

From that small beginning a much larger Association was eventually formed and later shows were held in what is now the Memorial Park. In 1898 a Special General Meeting in the Lesser Public Hall (probably the Liberal Club which stood on Bath Hill), changed the name from "The Keynsham Flower Show" to "The Keynsham & District Horticultural Society". The show was cancelled during the First World War but revived in 1922.

An informative article by Sue Trude on future Keynsham Flower shows can be found in our 2004 Journal on our website.  
<https://keysalthist.org.uk>

The practice of decorating the streets was not unusual. When Queen Charlotte the consort of George III visited Bath to take the waters and Bristol in the winter of 1817 the Perthshire Courier reported on Thursday 18 December ...

*“At nine o'clock Wednesday morning, the Royal cavalcade left Sydney House, Bath, for the city of Bristol. The day was very auspicious for travelling, and the neighbouring villages availed themselves of every opportunity to evince their loyalty to the Illustrious Personages. On the approach of the Royal travellers to Keynsham, a village six miles distant from Bristol, wreaths of laurel and other trophy were suspended across the road, and as they passed, the inhabitants expressed their pleasure, with loud huzzas, the ringing of the church bell, and a display of flags and laurel at their several habitations”.*

Although at the time the Queen was acting as the guardian for her husband during the period of his madness, she was visiting the area accompanied by just two of her ten children, the Duke of Clarence and Princess Elizabeth. She died a year later in the presence of her eldest son, The Prince Regent, at Dutch House (now Kew Palace) on 17 November 1818 and was buried at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. It is highly unlikely that her husband ever knew of her death. He died blind, deaf, lame and insane 14 months later.



## **The Slave Trade and Keynsham.**

By Brian Vowles

The pulling down of the Colston statue in Bristol reminds us of the often-forgotten local links to the abhorrent slave trade. A vast number of the slave owners were not aristocrats but middleclass or even lower class people but it comes as a surprise to discover that our inoffensive little town of Keynsham also once had connections with the terrible trade in human beings that existed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Amongst those benefitting from the sugar trade were John Racker Webb and William Webb the sons of a Keynsham man, Thomas Webb. Thomas had been born about 1722 and married a Mary Racker by licence in Bath Abbey on 30th August 1750. She was baptised at St John the Baptist Church, Keynsham in 1722 as were their children on the following dates: -

2nd Feb 1751/2	Molley Racker Webb
28th Feb 1753	Thomas Webb
7th Sep 1755	Rachel Webb
27th Jun 1757	Betty Webb
18th Feb 1759	<u>John Racker Webb</u>
3rd Feb 1762	Hester Webb
7th Dec 1763	<u>William Webb</u>

Thomas Webb Snr. was involved in a number of business dealings in the Keynsham area. In the Bath Chronicle dated 5 June 1783 he is referred to as a Maltster with a connection to the Queen Charlton Colliery. In 1769 Thomas Webb bought a plot of land next to "*the High Road leading from Bristol to Bath*" (now called Bath Hill East), for the sum of £122 and in 1771 he purchased more land on the site from Arthur Greenwollers for £75. On 1 April 1790 he borrowed £300 from Henry Brown of St

Anne's, Brislington with the property as security against the loan and on 11 October 1792 he borrowed a further £100 from Henry Brown with the same security. So, by 19 March 1794 Thomas Webb owed Henry Brown £300 plus £100 plus £50 interest but then he then borrowed a further £50.

Thomas Webb died in 1795 and was buried in Keynsham Churchyard on 23 February 1795. William Webb his son and Benjamin Millward (a Keynsham Solicitor) were appointed joint Executors of his will dated 17 March 1794. At the time William was in Jamaica so he had a Power of Attorney drawn up appointing Keynsham solicitor Benjamin Millward and his brother-in-law William Morrish as his Executors.

This Power of Attorney was made at Black River, Jamaica on 12 January 1796 and was witnessed by Thomas Thatcher and Richard Honeywell, both Master Mariners. Thomas Thatcher was the master of the ship 'Elizabeth' from the port of Bristol and on his next voyage home he brought the document back to England. On arrival he made a sworn statement in Chancery on 14 April 1796 appointing *"Benjamin Millward and William Morrish, both of the parish of Keynsham, Gentlemen to settle the Estate of Thomas Webb, to sell the properties as they thought proper and to settle all the accounts including any debts and borrowings"*.

But at the time of his death Thomas Webb still owed Henry Brown £401.16s.1½d and the estates and effects were insufficient to discharge the debt. As a result, in 1796 the Executors, Benjamin Millward and William Morrish had to sell the premises described in April 1790 as being the part of the ground bought from Arthur Greenwollers, the other part having been long since disposed of. In his will Thomas Webb had left his son William Webb his two freehold cottages with the garden adjoining off Bath Hill occupied by Job Cantle and Samuel



Rumsey as tenants. These were next to the cottage left to his daughter Betty Hitchman, and her husband William whom she had married by licence at Keynsham Parish Church on 25 December 1775 with Thomas Webb and John Hitchman as witnesses (these cottages were demolished and rebuilt in 2013). Thomas's daughter Hester Webb had married one of the executors, William Morrish, a widower, by licence on 25 July 1782 with Thomas again as one of the witnesses.

One of the confusing problems when writing about Jamaica, as with other former colonies, is that so many places were given the names from the settlers' homeland and it is often not clear to which country they refer. Local names such as Keynsham and Shirehampton crop up in the Jamaican records. For example, Chew Magna, in St Elizabeth, near Balaclava, was named by the Roberts Family after the Somerset village from which they came. At some time Thomas's son William Webb and his brother had sought their fortunes in Jamaica. In 1783 twenty-year old William was employed on the sugar and rum producing estate called 'Appleton' in the parish of St Elizabeth in the County of Cornwall in Jamaica as Overseer. This estate is still in existence and is one of foremost producers of rum on the island. At the time it belonged to Ezekiel and Caleb Dickinson, sons of Vickris Dickinson who owned the manor of Queen Charlton (England) at the time and it was William Webb who filed the accounts for the Appleton Estate until 1791.

It seems that the Dickinsons had the land that was granted to Vickris's grandfather, Captain Francis Dickinson who was rewarded with 6000 acres in Jamaica for his gallant conduct when the island was taken from the Spaniards in 1655 and Captain Francis certainly had land in St Elizabeth, Jamaica, in 1675. To make the land profitable slaves began to be imported from West Africa and the land produced the sugar which made vast fortunes for their owners. The plantations and refineries were inherited by

Vickris's father, Caleb, and passed onto his sons Ezekiel and Caleb II. In 1731 Caleb owned 454 slaves of whom 246 were male and 208 were female; 69 of these were boys and 50 girls. In 1754 Ezekiel and Caleb are recorded as being the landowners of 7055 acres but the brothers divided the estates in 1777 with Ezekiel and Caleb II running the Appleton Estate jointly and Vickris running his share alone from afar as there is no evidence that Vickris ever visited Jamaica. So, it would appear most likely that William Webb had gone to Jamaica as a result of his father Thomas's connections with Queen Charlton and Vickris Dickinson.

Although the Dickinsons were a Quaker family, Vickris left the faith at some point after the 1761 Quaker declaration forbade Quakers from owning slaves and the prospect of a fortune became too tempting. The local Queen Charlton Estate and house were bought separately and reunited by Vickris Dickinson in about 1769 (probably with his sugar trade profits). In addition, he built the Poor House at the top of Redlynch Lane in 1788 to give his villagers better living conditions than those experienced by his slaves and remodelled St Margaret's church in 1795.

The 1821 Jamaica Almanac – Returns of Giving-in for the March Quarter 1820 for the Parish of St Elizabeth in the County of Cornwall, recorded the number of slaves on various estates as follows... Dickinson and Harmans - Appleton 179, Barton Isles 171 Pepper 267. / Caleb Dickenson - Grossmonde 68, Maggotty 103, Middlesex 41 / Heirs of Vickris Dickenson (he had died in 1811) - Barton 220.

John Racker Webb, Thomas Webb's son, was also in St Elizabeth, Jamaica where by 1817 he was recorded as having become an assistant judge and magistrate. At the time he owned two plantations which were fittingly called the Keynsham and

Shirehampton estates, and he remained in Jamaica until his death at the 'Jamaican' Keynsham. The Bristol Mirror announced on Saturday 17 April 1830 "*Feb. 13 at Keynsham, in the island of Jamaica, aged 71, J. R. Webb. Esq.*".

From 1760 until 1830 he was recorded as being a slave-owner. In the 1821 Jamaica Almanac – "Returns of Giving-in for the March Quarter 1820 for the Parish of St Elizabeth in the County of Cornwall", John Racker Webb was the proprietor of "Lookout" with 39 slaves and at Rosely Hill 47. He was proprietor of 'Lookout' from 1821-26, but in 1827 Mary Wint became 'Lookout's' proprietor and it remained in the family until the 1960s. In 1810 John Racker Webb sold Mary Wint 433 acres of land in St Elizabeth for 10/- Jamaican, a gift but the reason for his generosity is apparent.

His tangled affairs led to his fathering three children with Mary Wint who was described in the will of her previous partner as a 'free quadroon', i.e. with one grandparent of African descent and three grandparents of European descent. One of these children was given his father's name of Thomas and he was born on 4th June 1798 and baptised at St Elizabeth on 17th September 1800. His sister Mary was born on 28th November 1799 and baptised at the same time as her brother. She married Robert Podmore Clark who later became one of the proprietors of the 'Keynsham' and 'Shirehampton' estates. In 1811 one Thomas Maddocks Angell was prosecuted for "instigating negroes to burn down a coffee store in the possession of John R. Webb"

The third child Hester was born on 24th September 1804 and married George Bowley Medley on 27th September 1825 at St John's Hackney. George Bowley Medley was a stockbroker of Threadneedle Street in 1826. He moved back to Jamaica in late 1820s and became Justice of the Peace and Assistant Judge in the

parish of Manchester in 1834. It appears that he was gifted the Keynsham Estate by his father-in-law. In 1836 he submitted a claim for compensation for the freeing of 99 slaves from the Shirehampton Estate for £2068.0s.6d. He returned to England by 1841 (the 1841 census shows him and his family in Lambeth, "*Jamaica planter, born Foreign parts*") as did many others fearing retribution when their slaves were eventually liberated. Our Keynsham man, John Racker Webb, had another illegitimate daughter, Ann Webb who was born on 28th September 1788 and baptised in St Elizabeth on 13th December 1803. Her mother was Jane Webb (a "free Negro") who was probably already a 35 year old adult when she was baptised on 1st January 1797.

In 1807 the African slave trade was abolished by Parliament, effective from 1 January 1808. Theoretically this meant that no more slaves could be brought from Africa to the colonies in the British West Indies, but slaves could still be transported from one colony to the other. Recognizing that the law was not being adhered to, the House of Commons in England passed a bill in 1815 requiring the registration of slaves which only became effective when it was adopted by the colonial legislatures. In 1816 an act was passed for a more particular return of slaves with more information, effective in June 1817, to keep a stricter check on any movement of the slaves and proprietors were obliged to make returns of slave numbers until 1834.

In 1817 on his estates John Racker Webb possessed 124 slaves, 72 males and 52 females but after his death, in 1832 the 110 slaves were still in the possession of George Medley, Thomas Webb and Robert Clark as co-proprietors as part of the 117 enslaved people acquired "*by deed of Gift from John R Webb & by him registered in Manchester*". Numbers fluctuated by 1835 when the claims for compensation were made but, when all the slaves were declared free, there were still 100 working on the

estate for which a claim of £1998 2s 11d compensation was made by George Bowley Medley on 14th December 1835. When John Racker Webb died in 1830 aged 71 in 'Keynsham', Jamaica, in his will he released William Morrish back in England's Keynsham from a debt of £300 and William's son and John Racker Webb's nephew, John Morrish's a debt of £500. That £500 had been secured by a mortgage on certain Keynsham properties. To his niece Hester Morrish, the youngest daughter of William Morrish, he left an annuity of £20 a year for her lifetime.

Other Keynsham connections with the slave trade included the Duke of Buckingham & Chandos who was the owner of vast tracts of land around this area and from 1813 -1836 he was in joint ownership with his wife of the Hope Plantation. He became a leading opponent to the abolition of the slave trade.

The Bristol Brass Company was formed in 1702 in response to the demand for brassware from the Bristol based Merchant Venturers who were investing in cargoes for trade with West Africa and the Caribbean. The Keynsham and Saltford Brass Mills produced trade objects to be exported to West Africa on the first leg of the triangular trade and the return goods were also key to the creation of wealth in Bristol and Bath, including sugar, molasses, cotton and tobacco. The demand for goods stimulated technological developments which made Bristol and South Wales world leaders in the production of copper and brass for over 150 years.

Although Britain paid the huge sum of £200m in 1834 to slave owners in compensation to slave owners to get the practice abolished no compensation was available for the slaves themselves. Sadly slavery has not gone away. Today 40.3 million people are still in forced labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and forced marriage worldwide.

## **A Refugee from Austria**

by Brian Vowles

With the terrible heart-rending stories of the refugees fleeing from the Russian invasion of Ukraine appearing in the media recently, it reminded me of another group who sought safety from persecution in Europe in a previous age. In the 2017 journal I wrote that on 31st May 1940 it was recorded in the Broadlands School Log that a refugee pupil named Kurt Deutsch had passed the entry exam for the Bath Technical School and was offered a “place under the conditions of entry for refugee children”. From this I guessed that he came on the Kindertransport scheme prevalent at the time, but how had he arrived in Keynsham? Since writing that I have been able to uncover more details. It appears that Kurt had been born in Vienna on 6 July 1926 and he was one of the 10,000 children brought to safety in Britain between December 1938 and September 1939

In 1938 Deborah (Dora) b. 11 August 1900 and Hugo Deutsch b. 20 July 1904, were living at Volker Strasse 13/7 in Vienna and, aware of the mounting dangers that Jews faced under the Nazi Reich, they put their daughter Ruth aged 13 on a Kindertransport which arrived in England on 20 December. The plan had been for her uncle (Alfred) to meet her off the train in London. But he didn't show up so she had to go with the other children to the reception point at Dover Court and then taken to Bath.

Ruth was given refuge with the Dyke family. Geoffrey Gilbert Dyke was an insurance agent, living at 30 Bath Road, Keynsham and who would give Kurt a character reference two years later). Ruth was then asked to find a family who would sponsor her brother Kurt (would offer to take him in).

Albert (Joe) Cantle was then the manager of the Polysulphin Soap works and was living on site with his family when he heard that there were children needing homes with families as they were fleeing Austria and he and his wife Florence, moved by the events taking place, agreed to take in Kurt Deutsch. Kurt had not long arrived when, so sadly, Albert Cantle died in tragic circumstances at work, Kurt discovering him in the factory at the foot of a ladder when he went to look for him as he was late for tea. This must have been

a terrible time for Kurt - already traumatised by leaving his home country and his foster family having to make big changes in their lives too as they had to leave the soap works and move to the family's house, Hollydene, in Rock Road (where the new flats are now being built).

His parents Hugo and Dora answered many adverts for domestic posts in England, whilst also applying for their papers to leave. They were lucky and they also managed to escape Vienna although they had to leave both Dora's and Hugo's mothers behind, their fate yet to be discovered. Fortunately, Dora and Hugo found temporary jobs as cook and gardener at the West Downs Preparatory School near Winchester. There Hugo was accepted as a genuine refugee by the Hampshire Tribunal on 17 October 1939. They were of course separated from their children but at least they were comforted by the knowledge that they were

1. 3. 39.

Kurt Deutsch  
 Date of Birth 6<sup>th</sup> July 1926  
 Place of Birth Vienna  
 Full Names of Hugo & Dora  
 Father Mother Deutsch  
 Address 13, Volkertstrasse  
 Vienna 27.  
 Occupation of Father Book Keeper.  
 Religion of Child Jew.

*"On reaching age 16 must be registered  
 as an alien with the Local Police."*  
 Dated 18<sup>th</sup> March 1939.  
 Witness  
 David Jon Leslie Beale Near Bernald  
 North Breach, Epsom Chemist manufacturer

safe.

Two years later after his parents had moved to London and he had reached the age of 16, Kurt was officially registered as an alien and on 19th August 1942 Kurt's case came before No.7 Bristol Regional Advisory Committee.

REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE		REFUGEE—MALE	920
<b>APPEAL DECISION</b>			
(1) Surname ( <i>block capitals</i> )	DEUTSCH.		
Forenames	Kurt Israel		
Alias			
(2) Date and place of birth	6th July 1926 : Vienna.		
(3) Nationality	German (by annexation).		
(4) Police Regn. Cert. No.	840187.	Home Office reference, if known	
		Special Procedure Card Number, if known	
(5) Address	"Hollydene", Rock Road, Keynsham, Somerset.		
(6) Normal occupation	Schoolboy.		
(7) Present Occupation	Schoolboy.		
(8) Decision of Tribunal	Not before a Tribunal. Recently attained 16 years of age.		
	Strike out which do not apply.		
(9) Decision of Advisory Committee	Exempted from 6A & 9A		
	Strike out which does not apply.		

\*53m (8 sorts) 3/40—[8338] 10050/667 30m 4/40 4070 G & S 704

[OVER]

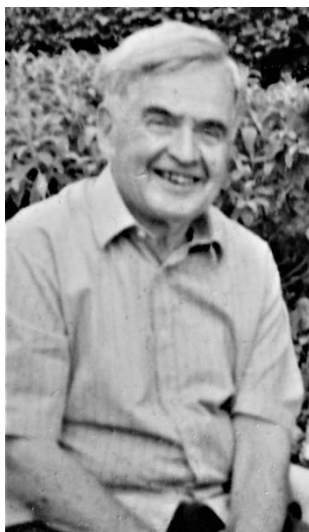
The evidence stated on the reverse of the card—

*"Deutsch came to this country on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1939 and is a Jew. His parents are living in London, where he is employed as an accountant. His sister Ruth, age 17 years, is also living in London. The alien is at present a pupil at Bath Technical School. He was vouched for by Mr G.G. Dyke, Local Defence Worker of 30 Bath Road, Keynsham who attended before this committee and stated that he had known the alien for the past two years and had always found him conscientious, loyal to this country and thankful for the refuge afforded him in this country. Mr Dyke also confirmed the alien's statement to the committee that he would like to make this country his home after the war. The committee*



*regarded the alien as a genuine racial refugee whose being at liberty in no way constituted a danger to the state."*

In spite of being of a different faith, Kurt was always treated as one of the family by the Cantles and after his time at the Bath Technical School he went on to forge a career in industry. He worked for ICI Metals (subsequently IMI) from 1976 to 1983 and at Warwick University holding the post of Director of Industrial Liaison/Technology Transfer from 1983 to 1989. Until 1980 he was active in the Institute of Mechanical Engineers. He also sat on the UK Government's Research Requirements Board from 1977 to 1981. He was a refugee who through hard work made a great success of his escape from persecution and the holocaust that consumed so many of his faith..



In 1955 Kurt married Sheila Roper in London. He died in 2018 and was survived by his wife and two of their three children (their oldest son died tragically in a road accident on his first day at secondary school). It was said that he was always very interesting to talk to and had a lovely Austrian accent. Kurt's mother Dora died at the Nightingale House Hospice, Wandsworth on 2 March 1988 and Hugo the following year on 13 December 1989 also at Nightingale House. It is not known whether his grandmothers survived the horrors perpetrated by the Nazi regime in his homeland.

Ed – My thanks to Albert Cante's Great granddaughter Larissa

Roberts who supplied much of the information for this article.

**Memories of my childhood growing up in the New Inn on Bath Hill.** By Sid Wiltshire.

I was born at The New Inn in 1931 and lived in Keynsham till '87 and this included the war years. There is a deep cellar under the New Inn and during the air raids on Bristol my family and some neighbours used to go down there for shelter. A couple from Bristol were regular visitors. My parents fitted makeshift bunk beds so we were relatively comfortable and I can still remember the steaming hot cups of cocoa mother used to make. I can also recall going outside to the garden in the dark, watching the searchlights searching for enemy aircraft and then watching as the ack-ack guns attempted to shoot down any plane caught in the beam. At times the sky would be red from the fires started in Bristol and we could hear the sounds of the bombs and the guns even though it was miles away.



During daylight hours we could always tell when a raid was immanent because we could see the barrage balloons going

up; there seemed to be hundreds of them but I wondered if they would be of any use as they could easily be shot down. At night they would be invisible of course and any plane colliding with the steel tethers was doomed. Keynsham escaped any real bomb damage. As far as I know only one house in the High St was hit by an oil bomb but there were many bomb craters in the surrounding fields where planes had jettisoned their loads. A cluster of bombs fell in a field at the end of Hurn lane. There was about eleven of them but only one went off leaving a huge crater in Farmer Kendall's field. When the bomb disposal team had finished removing the duds, my pals and I spent a lot of time searching for bomb fragments.

Throughout the war the armed services would give morale boosting parades and exhibitions of guns etc. I remember an amusing incident at one of these parades. The army held one at the cricket ground on Wellsway and when the show was finished the soldiers were marched down the road headed by a small band complete with drum major twirling his staff. But he made a mistake with his directions because he turned left into the Lime works turning.!! Utter chaos of course resulted.

There was also regular 'National Savings' weeks when we were encouraged to buy saving stamps the proceeds of which went towards the war effort. Folk were asked to donate scrap metal, particularly aluminium, to be turned into Spitfires. I remember many houses in Keynsham had their railings removed in the drive for scrap metal. Cars had hoods fitted over their headlights to make them invisible to enemy planes and all chrome brightwork, like bumpers, had to be painted white to prevent any reflections. Houses had blackout curtains over the windows so as not to show any light to aid enemy aircraft. All the signposts were removed in case of invasion by enemy paratroopers. Petrol was rationed and only available for essential war work. Our

modest Ford 8 was laid up locked in the garage supported on piles of bricks and covered with sheets awaiting the end of the war. Fortunately, my father who had been called up and was in the RAF, was posted to Filton and so got an allowance for petrol so he could get home each night.

Food was rationed and scarce but living in the pub we didn't do too badly because farmers would bring us rabbits or chickens and eggs in exchange for a pint! Folk with gardens used to bring veg and fruit which was always welcome. We learned how to forage in the fields for blackberries and nuts and mushrooms if we were lucky. My pal, Ken Hurd and I used to walk to Chewton and gather watercress from the stream and bunch it up and sell it to Vic Davis the green grocer on Bath Hill. Fuel for the fire was another thing that was short. So whole gangs of us kids would go 'Wooding' in the fields and woods around. Armed with saws and choppers we gathered dead branches from the hedge rows. Often a branch was too big to cut up so we would drag it home in one piece. What a spectacle we made - a load of scruffy kids dragging tree branches on the road.

Life in wartime Keynsham was not all doom and gloom. We were entertained by the army and RAF during their fund-raising weeks whereby we were



encouraged to invest in 'National Savings' by purchasing saving stamps at 6p a time till you had amassed the huge sum of 15/- for a certificate which you could redeem for cash. We were also treated to patriotic films which were shown on a screen by a specially converted van with the projector inside. The screen was shaded by shutters and was transparent so that pictures could be viewed by back projection! Sometimes a military band would be in attendance and provide a musical interlude and perhaps a speech or two by some officer of rank. Also, at these rallies there was a 'Totalisator' board displaying the grand total of funds raised to date together with the target amount! 'Wings for Victory' was the title of one of these events and was designed to collect scrap metal for the war effort especially aluminium. Folk donated their pots and pans to be turned into Spitfires etc.

The army would display a tank and perhaps a gun or two. There was never a dull moment! The army used to hold sports days on the cricket field and these were always well attended. There was the usual running, jumping events but also one that caused great amusement. It took the form of a man armed with a long pole in a wheelbarrow and pushed by another towards a scaffold on which was suspended a hinged trough filled with water. The trough had a board fixed to it and hanging down as a counter balance with a hole cut in it. The aim of the event was for the players to run beneath the rig and get the pole through the hole without spilling the water. No one ever did it of course and always ended up soaked to the skin!

Whilst browsing through some old photos I came across one of the street parties in Fairfield Terrace as part of the V.E. day celebrations. Although I was just a small boy at the time, I remember it well. Tables and chairs were hauled from the houses and arranged in a line in the road. Folk also loaned plates and cutlery etc. The ladies baked cakes with ingredients donated by

everyone from their meagre rations of sugar and flour etc. They made sandwiches of fish and meat paste together with some egg and chicken ones

I remember watercress sandwiches and even some home cured ham sandwiches from the local 'Pig Club'. There were also some buttered scones with real butter supplied by a local farmer's wife. Jelly and custard was also on the menu and the ladies worked miracles with the limited foods available at the time.

I recall someone produced an accordion and we all had a sing song of the popular songs of the day. Like 'Don't Fence Me In', 'Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree', 'There'll be Bluebirds Over the White Cliffs of Dover', 'We'll Meet Again'. 'Let Him Go Let Him Tarry' and of course the one about Hitler's shortage in the trouser dept! So, all in all everyone had a good time and it was repeated a few months later on V.J. Day!

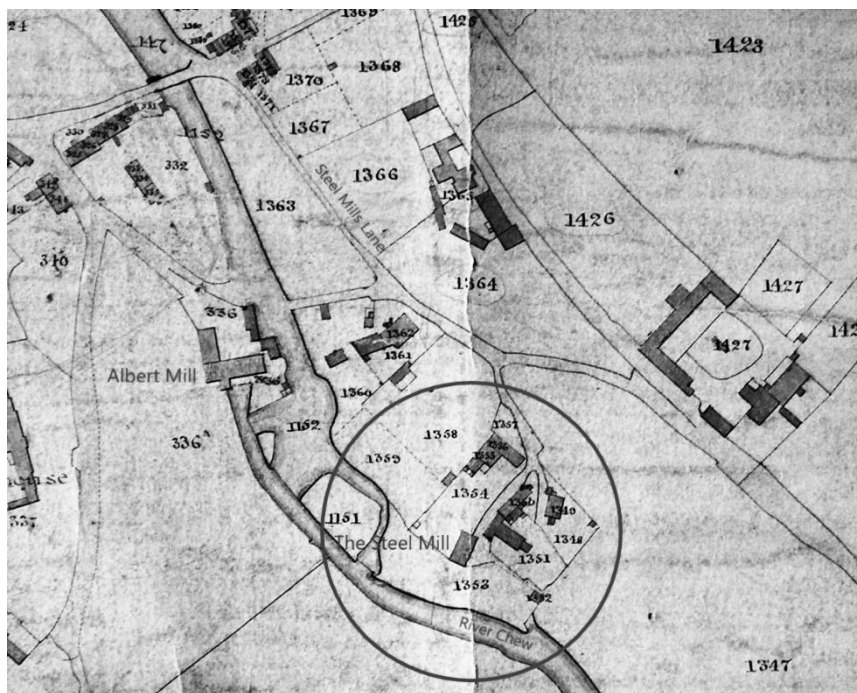


(Sid now lives in Ayrshire in Scotland but his memories of the Keynsham of his youth remain crystal clear. - Ed.)

## The Shallard Steel works, Keynsham (1716 to 1812)

By Paul Benn. (Paul is member of the society who has recently been researching this subject. Ed).

At the end of Steel Mills Lane, to the south of Keynsham, is a group of old cottages where there was once a noisy and smoky industry producing some of the first mass produced steel in Britain. Here was one of the first steel furnaces built in Britain and the only one in the Southwest. Although the actual furnaces no longer exist the rest of the buildings constitute the best-preserved 18<sup>th</sup> Century steel works in Britain.



The Steel Works included all the buildings inside the circle on this 1837 tithe map

It was involved in an international trade, converting Swedish iron into steel for export to North America to supply plantation owners with tools to be used by their slaves in the most horrendous conditions in the South Carolina swamps. It is not known exactly when the steel works was built, however, it seems that it was up and running by 1716 as there is a record of a Keynsham steelworker called William Shallard getting married on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1716

The first written observation of the steel works is in a journal written by a Swedish industrial spy called Henric Kahlmeter during his tour of Britain in 1725.

In 1753 another Swedish industrial spy, Reinhold Angerstein, also wrote about the works.

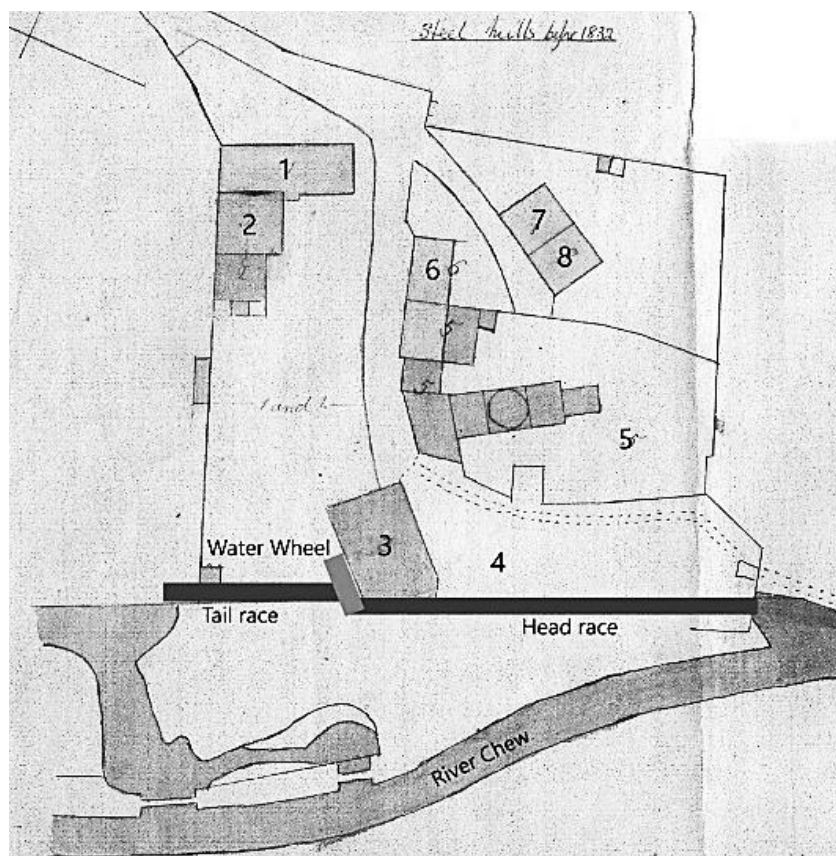
*At the end of Keynsham, right next the brass works, lies a steel works with furnaces and one hammer for forging. The steel here is made from Oregrund iron or other Swedish iron, although Spanish, Russian and even English iron has been used from time to time.*

The brass works Angerstein refers to was a brass battery mill on the Albert Mill site across the river. Oregrund refers to Swedish iron that was shipped out of the port of Oregrund, north of Stockholm, and was considered to be the best iron for making steel in the 1700s.

An advert for the sale of the steel works in 1814 lists the following buildings; *Dwelling House, with Offices, Gardens, Stable and Orchard adjoining; Two Steel Furnaces; Smith's Shop; Warehouses; Charcoal house, and Barton; Mill house, with newly erected Hammer Mill and Steam Engine (of an eight horse power)*. This advert, in conjunction with a plan of the area drawn in 1832, shown below, gives a good indication of the layout of the works in its final years.



Buildings 1 and 2 were the warehouses. Building 3 was the hammer mill. This was originally called the South Mill and used to be owned by Keynsham Abbey. Rather confusingly, when this mill went out of use it was just called a barn and the label “South Mill” was transferred to the building now called Albert Mill.



1832 plan of steel mills area with mill water wheel and leates or races added.

The approximate positions of the head and tail races have been drawn on the map but these were filled in when the mill was converted

to steam power around 1800. This building has now been converted into a house called The Steel Mill.

Building 5 was the Manager's House or works office and one of the furnaces is shown as the circular structure in the back garden.



Derwencote Cementation Steel Furnace circa 1730

The furnace would have probably looked much like the surviving Derwentcote furnace shown above, which was built in the 1730s in the Derwent Valley near Newcastle



The Steel Mill

They must have been a close family as in his will Christopher requested that he



Shallard family grave, St John's Church, Keynsham.

be buried as close as possible to his father and grandfather.

All four of the Shallard men were wealthy enough to be deemed Gentleman and could pay to be buried inside St John's church. The family grave stone is just inside the entrance underneath the font.

John Shallard and his two sons, William and Samuel, started the business. When John died in 1735 his son, William, was to inherit the steel works but he died before his father's will was executed, so it was John's grandson, Christopher who

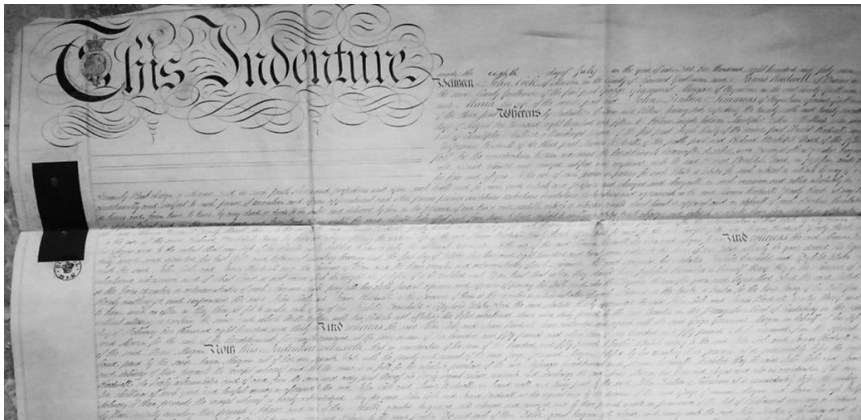
inherited the business instead. When Christopher Shallard died in 1754 his eldest son William Dillon was only 13 years old so his wife Jane took over running the business. But only months after William reached the age of 21, allowing him to inherit his father's business, he also died. Since her only other son, Christopher Dillon, was only 9, again Jane had to step in until he came of age.

The Swedish spy, Angerstein, was rather rude about his meeting with Jane;

*The Steelmaster, to whom this works belonged, had recently died, and when I arrived the widow soon appeared. She was so big and fat that she could have concealed the whole furnace*

It is possible that the reason he is so rude is because she refused to give him access to the site and Angerstein was irritated with the authority wielded by a woman. After handing over the business to her second son, Jane moved into 46 Rivers Street in Bath, to live out her remaining days in luxury. She died on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1780 and is also buried inside St John's church. Her lengthy will ensures that her daughters were well provided for.

By 1812 business does not seem to be going well as a £900 loan is obtained from the wealthy Keedwell family. But in 1814 it seems that this money has been used up as an advert appeared in the Bristol Times for the sale of Mill. However, the Shallards could not find a buyer for the business and on 19th February the following year Christopher Dillon Shallard was declared bankrupt. He died not long after on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1815 at the age of 63 and was buried in the church graveyard at St John's. The actual sale of the works occurred on the 26<sup>th</sup> August 1815 when the steel works estate was transferred to the Keedwell family to pay off the loan



Indenture for the sale of the Shallard Steel works estate.

## **ELIZABETH WHITE**

We are sorry to hear of the death of one of our long serving members, Elizabeth White on 22 February 2022. Elizabeth read history at Bedford College, London and did her PGCE at Cambridge. She taught history at former grammar schools in Hampshire and Midsomer Norton before her teaching career brought her to Keynsham. When she retired, she completed an MA in Local and Regional Studies at Bath Spa University. She was an energetic member of our Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society and by 1991 was acting as its secretary. In 1990 she completed the mammoth task of editing the comprehensive publication, Keynsham & Saltford: Life and Work in Times Past 1539-1945 and in 2005 she published 'St. John the Baptist, Keynsham: A History of the Church'. She chaired the committee of the Avon Local History and Archaeology for several years and in 2010 ALHA published her booklet 'For the benefit of the children', the battle for a board school in Keynsham, 1870-1893. She gave presentations at several ALHA local history days; contributed numerous articles to journals; was a popular and entertaining speaker on the local history circuit; and was generous with help, information and encouragement to local history enquirers.



In 2007 she moved to Pill in North Somerset where she remained passionate about local history. She continued to give talks to many local groups, conducted "walks and talks" around Pill, and enjoyed researching the history of Portbury Church and the influence of the Berkeley family in the area. She said her love of local history began early in her teens when she was riding her bicycle around the villages of West Sussex and exploring the countryside and it remained with her throughout her life.

