# NORTH WANSDYKE

# PAST

# AND

# PRESENT


Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society

No. 3, 1990

# North Wansdyke

# Past and Present

**Journal of Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society**

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# Editorial

The improved appearance of this issue of *North Wansdyke Past and Present* is made possible by the adoption of the latest laser printing technology. The text should be easier to read, but the extra cost is still reasonable, compared with that of old-fashioned typesetting.

Roy Niblett's memories of pre-First World War Keynsham, *A Village Childhood*, first appeared in the University of Bristol *Newsletter Supplement*, 5 November 1987. It is reprinted here with the kind permission of the Editor and Author.

Two of the papers, *The Doctors Fox of Brislington House* and *Chandos Lodge*, were first presented as lectures to the Society. Connie Smith, our first Archivist, was an assiduous researcher and responsible for laying the foundations of the present valuable archive. There are other treasures which we hope to publish in future issues.

Thanks are due to Barbara J. Lowe, Margaret Whitehead, and Elizabeth White, who searched out material for this issue, checked facts and in some cases rewrote outdated sections.

Lacking space in this issue for *Recent Publications*, attention is drawn to some important papers: Barbara J. Lowe, et al, 'Keynsham Abbey: Excavations 1961-1985', *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society*, 131, 1987, 81-156; M. Whittock, 'Domesday Keynsham', *Bristol & Avon Archaeology*, 6, 1987, 5-10; M. Whittock, 'Reflections on the cultural context and function of the West Wansdyke', *Bristol & Avon Archaeology*, 7, 1988, 2-5; R. Iles, 'West Wansdyke', *Bristol & Avon Archaeology*, 7, 1988, 6-10.

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# A Village Childhood

## Roy Niblett

Keynsham, in July 1906, when I was born, was a large village between Bristol and Bath, and very contentedly separated from both. It had character and characters lived in it.

It was a quiet place in those days. The four bells of Queen Charlton church wafted their sound on Sunday evenings slow and melancholy over the fields. But from Monday to Saturday the main street of the village and its shops were busy - George E. Chappell's grocery store opposite the Parish Church (later, much later, labelled *International Stores*); the grocery shop of Chappell Brothers near the Post Office, opposite the Wesleyan Chapel; Mrs Beer's sweet shop with its bars of *Fry's Five Boys Chocolate* with the Five Boys on the label at various stages of blissfully eating it. There was the Constitutional Club, which, I gathered, was very exclusive and snobbish; the chemist's with four enormous pear-shaped glass vessels in his window, each filled with a bright coloured liquid, one red, one heliotrope, one green, one yellow.

What family quarrel was it that caused George E. to separate from Chappell Brothers, and how many brothers were there once upon a time? Inside George E. Chappell's shop there were tins of biscuits arrayed, mostly with rather dull patterns on the sides of the tins to indicate the species of biscuits they contained - Marie, Garibaldi, Oval Rich Tea and so on. But there was one tin whose sides magnificently represented a tropical blue sea with a sandy bay. The biscuits were called *Bourbon* and they seemed to me delicious and of superb quality - a quality far higher, I must believe, than those tame descendants of theirs which now have the same title so undeservedly given. George E. Chappell also stocked *Bear Brand* tinned fruits, with a fascinating label showing a comfy sort of bear sitting down and looking at himself in a mirror holding a tin of *Bear Brand* apricots, whose label also portrayed a comfy looking bear holding a tin of apricots and looking

in a mirror - and so on, fascinatingly, apparently ad infinitum.

In between this shop, with its large two-window front, and the Parish church was a large triangular space along which traffic passed, but which was the venue of exciting events. At intervals, there was a military band, said to be a German band of itinerant players, who made blaring music in return for coppers dropped into hats. More exciting still was a bear attached by a chain to its keeper. The bear performed some antics at command, as coppers were industriously collected from spectators. The Town Crier also used this venue as one of several points in the village from which he proclaimed public events which were to take place in Keynsham in the next few days. He preceded his sing-song utterances by ringing a bell loudly and then calling out what sounded to me like 'O Yes! O Yes! O Yes!' It was only much later that I was given to understand that this was a corrupted form of the Old French 'Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!'

Then there was Bert Dorey's greengrocery shop with his horse and two-wheeled cart often outside, waiting to go the rounds of the district delivering goods from house to house. When I was six I used to be allowed sometimes to go with Bert on such a delivery expedition - being left, fearfully, in charge of horse and reins as he made deliveries. There was at least one occasion when the horse made for some grass on the other side of the road, disobedient to such feeble pull on the reins as I could manage, so that before Bert could return to restore normality there was an irate driver of some other cart brought up sharply in the road that Bert's was impeding.

Further along the High Street was the Post Office, whose hours of business were long and included even an hour and a half's opening from 9 to 10.30 am on Sundays. We had at least three postal deliveries a day, the last in the late afternoon or early evening. It was certainly possible then to post a letter to Bristol early in the morning and, if your correspondent wrote a reply at once, and posted it, to receive that reply by the evening delivery on the same day.

The shop I knew best of all was the Sticklers' shoe shop. The Sticklers had been our next door neighbours when we lived in Station Road; the

Stickler children, including my contemporary Winnie, were a friendly lot, and George Stickler, their father, was a superb craftsman at his cobbling trade. He would expertly drive small nails in a pattern around the sole made of leather which he was fastening to a shoe. One by one the small nails would come out of his mouth, where he kept a supply of maybe 20, as he hammered each in turn into the precise spot called for. He was a shrewd man, with intelligent comments on all sorts of matters to be overheard by a small boy in his workshop.

I can recollect various social distinctions which were real to me as I grew up in the village, though I would not of course have thought of them in those terms. The doctor who had helped to bring me into the world was named Peach Taylor and he had three daughters whom I regarded as undoubtedly superior beings. When the time came for them to go to school they did not go to the local Church of England school, and when they were old enough they went day by day to schools in Bristol.

I cannot have been more than five when, following the fashion of the day, Dr Taylor decided that to prevent the constant succession of colds I got in the winter - one of which developed into 'bronchial pneumonia' - I should have my tonsils removed. This had to be done in Bristol General Hospital, some five miles from our village, and necessitated going to the hospital and waiting with other small boys and girls for the operation to be carried out. I was taken by my mother one morning to the hospital. We went by bus and walked from the bus route to the hospital not more than, I suppose, a quarter of a mile. There was a long, long wait in the waiting room before I was summoned into the room where the operation itself was done. It was done without anaesthetic and I can remember the surgeon inserting an instrument to keep my mouth wide open and another to catch the tonsils when they had been cut out, so that they did not escape into the lower regions. Afterwards I was kept in another room sitting down until the bleeding had eased and then we were discharged. But it was too late in the day then to catch the bus which would take us back all the way to Keynsham. We could get a tram back to the edge of Bristol and then had to walk the remaining two miles or so home. It was

certainly after midnight when we arrived home and I cannot imagine today such an early discharge of a small patient in the condition I was in. But I survived.

Much of the imagery I have used all my life in placing situations read about in novels or poems has come from those familiar village streets and from house interiors I encountered before the age of eight. I imagine that many people must draw in their dreams and in their reading upon the pictorial stores laid down for them in childhood.

On Sundays, in childhood, my father used to take me for walks in the area - in particular to see one Georgie, a swan, who moved with such dignity and grace on the shining waters of the river Chew two miles or so from our house, even on the fast-moving sliding waters, above the weir.

But it was with my mother that I passed most of the out-of-school hours week by week. She, like my father, was the youngest of a large family, and some of her brothers and sisters and members of their families I came to know as childhood went on.

My mother was an attentive and excellent cook and one expedition on which she occasionally took me was to a cookery demonstration at Keynsham Drill Hall where an assembly of mothers, some accompanied by children as mine was, saw a young woman, aided by a gas cooker, magically producing cakes, pies, buns and tarts. 'Take 6 oz of *Brown and Polson's* self-raising flour; add 4 oz of *Brown and Polson's* plain flour and mix together in a basin with a little milk (like this)...' and so on. At home a variety of chairs served me for ovens, their seats forming to top and their legs the sides.

Further afield, there were trips to Bristol and Bath. I much preferred Bristol. The dignity of Bath was too overwhelming. Its buildings frowned on small children. And though it was intriguing to be able to sip 'the water' from the metal cup-on-a-chain attached to a public fountain, its taste was peculiar. But Bristol was different: it was full of life and variety. Once or twice we visited Clifton Zoo; the roars of the lions audible sometimes before we entered the gates - and there they were, brushing the bars of their cage as they paced undulatingly to and

fro, waiting with flashing eyes for their meat, hours before it was pushed by a keeper with his long-handled fork between the bars. The reptile house with its boa constrictor was horribly fascinating, and to see it fed, with the bulge formed by - was it a rabbit? -travelling down its huge tubular body, revolted me. The stench of the animal house was off-putting, too. But the elephant rides and the camel rides were delights, even if at moments of ascent and descent a trifle nerve-wracking. It must have been in 1911 that I watched, with my mother, Edward VII on a Royal visit to the city, or was it the newly crowned George V paying his first visit to the West? I remember the crowds, and the vivid hush preceding the arrival of the Royal carriage, but not the occupants.

Occasionally, maybe twice a year, my mother visited an old friend called Annie Blackler. We went by bus to Bitton and then walked to Warmley where she lived in a house which had a workshop attached, for Charles, her husband, was a tailor who employed three or four women workers to help him. They could be dropped in upon by a small boy: and he could be seen as he sat with legs akimbo sewing, or stooped over a long table cutting the cloth for a pair of trousers. The attractions of a visit had to be paid for but the credits on the whole outran the debits. I had two teas - one, at 4 pm in the best room of the house, was partaken of by Mrs Blackler and mother - with myself bidden to drink the china tea from a delicate cup and eat pieces of bread, spread with butter, jam and lovely clotted cream. But on condition that no crumbs were dropped . . . The seat of each chair was protected from dust by a tight cover, and there were antimacassars to guard the tops of the armchairs. The piano was similarly decorated. I was beholden to sit upright ('Don't lean back') and to remain silent save when spoken to ('Little boys should be seen but not heard'). And in replying I must not refer to my mother as 'she' ('She's the cat's mother'). This I found extremely difficult not to do and still wonder what the required recipe was. Yes, afternoon tea was a terrifying ordeal and the compensation of the clotted cream was not enough. But there was always 6 o'clock tea to look forward to relaxedly. This was a meal I could share with Charlie and Norah and the other workers. There were meaty sandwiches and no prohibitions about sitting or

making crumbs. But it wasn't served in the best room. Afterwards the workers cycled off to the villages in which they lived and which had intriguing names: Doynton, Pucklechurch, Wick.

In between meals I could go out for a walk on Goose Green which stretched between the house and the embankment, a quarter of a mile away, along which the Midland Railway trains ran between Bath and Gloucester or Bath and Bristol - with an occasional through express, from Birmingham to Bournemouth, perhaps excitingly double-headed. The hazards included the population of geese on the green: clearly they lay in wait for small boys and could recognise me. They could hiss menacingly through lowering necks and run surprisingly fast towards me, I discovered. Their wings they could use as powerful weapons. On one side of the Green there were disused brickworks, with old rails, partly grass-covered, connecting one part with another. This was splendid territory for exploring.

But in Keynsham itself there was plenty to interest me, some provided by the changing seasons of the year and by its festivals. 'One a penny, two a penny, hot cross buns; one a penny, two a penny all hot buns', sang the lilting boy, with his swinging basket, its handle within his elbow. You got seven of the smaller ones for thruppence, seven of the larger for sixpence. And each had its currants and its glossy top. On Easter Day there were round yellow Easter cakes with serrated edge, but I preferred the Simnel cakes topped with their 'hundreds and thousands' of tiny sweets which had marked Mothering Sunday weeks before. Late in the year Fireworks Day on 5 November meant adjournments from garden to garden as friends set their bonfires alight in agreed sequence. Each young guest could, if he liked, bring a few sparklers or crackers of his own. And at Christmas (I was never required to believe in Father Christmas, indeed such deception was rather frowned on by both my parents), there was joy unconfined - at waking to find and explore the stockings (one of mother's added to one of mine) hanging down near the brass knob at the foot of the bedstead. Stirring of the pudding in the large basin before it was cooked, weeks earlier, and wishing ('You mustn't tell your wish or it won't come true') added anticipation to the delight of tasting it at

Christmas dinner. We never had a 'bought pudding', openly scorned as the inferior article it undoubtedly was compared to the ones my mother made.

Emigration was a normal part of the life of the village. The sons of one of the large families who lived near us, named Clark, when they left school, one by one went off to Canada. One of my mother's friends had gone with husband and all her family to Alberta, where they bought a plot of land, and throughout my childhood we had letters from time to time postmarked 'Grassy Lake' and telling of their toil and simple pleasures and gradually increasing prosperity.

My first seven years in Keynsham seem, looking back, to have contained a quite remarkable amount of leisure and of sunshine. I remember the sunny days; I hardly remember the rainy ones. There were many walks, notably one through the fields below the main railway track to the Humpty Dumps and by the river - the river Avon, whose serpentine course was bordered by fields lush in the early summer with cowslips, later with buttercups. In the autumn there were moon daisies growing in profusion along the borders of lanes and peopling the railway cutting. Near the bridge over that cutting I looked with increasing intensity of interest at the expresses on their way between Bristol and London and London and Bristol, with their superb and well polished engines, many of them named. They made a magnificent noise as they dashed by at 60 mph in an ecstasy of steam and speed. Later on I collected engine names and numbers like 10,000 other small boys. But the collecting instinct and the aesthetic pleasure were two distinct things, not coincident, even if simultaneous.

In 1913 much family discussion took place on what was to happen about a secondary education for me - an intention which my father had had firmly in mind before I reached the age of one. If we remained Keynsham residents, the chances were much less of my having a secondary education at all than if we emigrated to Bristol. Moreover, even if one obtained one of the few secondary school places Somerset allowed, this would mean a daily journey into Bristol throughout secondary schooldays. It was decided that, to obtain the necessary residential qualifications for me, we should move to Bristol soon after

my eighth birthday, thus enabling me to study for various scholarships when the time came. But, at seven, I was of age to leave the infants' school and for a year I went to the Church of England 'big' school in Keynsham, that is, the school to which the 8s to 13s went, for 13 was then still the statutory leaving age. One of the memorable things for me about that year was being 'withdrawn' from religious education under the Cowper-Temple clause. My mother felt that for me to be taught the catechism and the Anglican creed was against her religious principles - and anyway educationally undesirable. In fact, what happened was that I was given a seat at the back of the room, with some arithmetic to do, while the other boys and girls in my class were taught the formularies in the syllabus. This meant that I came to learn the catechism and the Creed on the side while doing, or pretending to do my arithmetic. So that, maybe, everyone benefited.

Our move to Bristol, exciting in prospect for me and much looked forward to, was timed for September 1914. I can vividly remember the newspaper placards which appeared in Keynsham streets on the night of 3 August that year. One said simply, 'Midnight decides'. And duly on 4 August, the Great War was declared and when we moved to Bristol that was already a month old with its threats of unknowns to come.

# Recollections of the Good(?) Old Days

## About 1906 to 1914

## Rex Harris

I was taken to Chapel from a very early age, because I have found pictures which my father drew to amuse me on the fly leaf of a hymn book, and this moved about the pews for many years and possibly entertained succeeding generations.

I used to stare upwards at the gas jets set high in the roof (for ventilation, I believe) and downwards at a very dusty unpolished floor.

The building was almost gaudily decorated (in contrast to today), the work of Henry Harvey under the direction of John Fear, founder of the Fear Institute. Even the ceiling panels were painted, as those still over the chancel, and the Ten Commandments beautifully written on either side of the Communion Table. Perhaps it is a pity that they were not left there.

Pew rents were paid, so that families were always to be found in the same place which, perhaps, became monotonous but possibly helped the Minister to spot absentees! We sat fairly near the back. The Phil. Gibbons' immediately behind, the Gus Gibbons' behind them. On our right the Jenkins' long family and behind them the Benjafields. In front of us the Loxton family, who were usually slightly late having driven from Queen Charlton by horse and trap, and having to find stabling in the vicinity. In front of them the Rev. Pawlyn and three daughters, then the Kinnersleys with sons and daughter, then the four Misses Wood, and forward again Henry Harvey who always sang most heartily.

There was practically no ceremony. The Minister conducted the entire service and read the notices. The collection was taken by one steward on each aisle, all in cash (about £15?). Afterwards the plates were

placed on the chancel steps whilst the Minister had a rest and the congregation remained seated also.

Dress was formal, top hats and morning coats not unusual. No pegs: one's hat had to go under the pew and so emerged somewhat dusty, but there were umbrella stands at each pew, eight of which still remain around the pillars in the vestibule.

The Caretaker and his wife regularly occupied the back pew under the gallery stairs, mornings and evenings. They would lock and unlock and do the cleaning. I think they lived in a cottage across the road, about where the Health Food shop is now, so that they were easily on call.

Visiting Ministers could travel from Bristol by train, arriving at 10.27, leaving just comfortable time to walk to Chapel by 11.00. Afterwards they would be entertained by families and return by train. Rail service was reliable and cheap (about 1/6d return: 7.5p) and fairly frequent even on Sundays.

The Chapel was very cold, one boiler serving both Chapel and schoolroom, neither sufficiently. Sunday School was conducted in the afternoon, so that children were not seen in Chapel so frequently as today. One of the principal changes that I notice, very much for the good, is the willingness and confidence of the young generation to take part in Church and related activities. I venture to hope that this interest and training will remain with them all their lives.

# Friendly Societies

## Sue Trude


Among my souvenirs I have several booklets relating to my Grandfather's membership of a Friendly Society. These are dated 1886-8, and an *Acknowledgement of Receipt* of his wife's *Certificate of Good Health* is dated 27th June 1898.

The objects of the Society were: 1, Insuring certain sums of money on the lives of its members, and for the burial of members' wives; 2, Paying a weekly allowance to members when bodily or mentally sick, and therby unable to follow their employment; 3, For supplying medical attendance and medicine to members; 4, For granting temporary relief to members in distressed circumstances, and to wives and children of deceased members; 5, For assisting members when compelled to travel in search of employment.

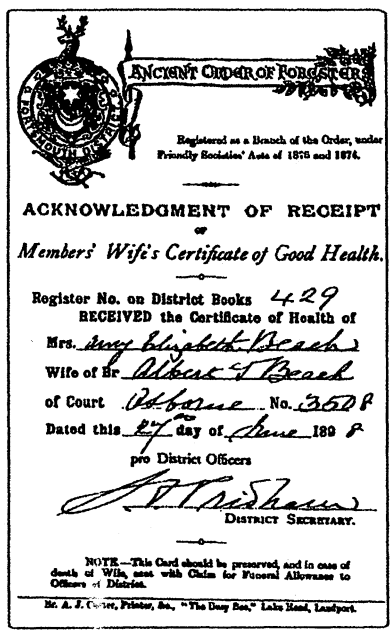
These benefits were possible as each member had to pay an entrance fee and periodical contributions; they were fined for any infraction of the Rules; and there was the interest on the accumulated capital of the Society.

A Surgeon was appointed to each Society, and it was his duty to examine all sick members and 'provide them with proper and sufficient medical attention during their affliction', and to supply the necessary medicines. The empty bottles were to be returned to the surgeon, or paid for by the member. The Surgeon was required to 'do his utmost to restore the health of the Member'. For his duties the Surgeon received 1s per quarter for each benefit member, the salary to be paid half-yearly out of the Management Fund.

The sick benefit contributions were paid monthly, as follows:

| Age of Member | Sick & Funeral Fund |
|---|---|
| 18 - 22 | 1s 10d |
| 22 - 24 | 1s 10.5d |
| 24 - 26 | 1s 11.5d |
| 26 - 28 | 2s 1d |
| 39 - 40 | 3s 0d |

An amendment to the Society's Rules was added in 1905, whereby any member could invest any surplus money in the New Surplus Fund. Interest at the rate of 4% per annum on each complete pound of surplus money invested was to be added to the member's account on 31st December each year.



ANCIENT ORDER OF FORESTERS

Registered as a Branch of the Order, under Friendly Societies' Acts of 1875 and 1876.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT

OF

*Members' Wife's Certificate of Good Health.*

Register No. on District Books 429

RECEIVED the Certificate of Health of

Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Beach

Wife of Br Albert J Beach

of Court Osborne No. 3508

Dated this 27 day of June 189 8

pro District Officers

J. T. Tidsham

DISTRICT SECRETARY.

NOTE.—This Card should be preserved, and in case of death of Wife, sent with Claim for Funeral Allowance to Officers of District.

Keynsham had several Friendly Societies. Maybe among your souvenirs you have similar booklets, which I know would be of interest to Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society.

# The Doctors Fox of Brislington House

## Connie Smith

*This paper was originally written by Connie Smith in 1968, for presentation to a meeting of the Society. Elizabeth White has contributed additional information that has since come to light, to bring it up to date.*

For hundreds of years mental illness was regarded as the work of the Devil. In the eighteenth century for twopence you could visit Bethlehem Hospital (Bedlam, as it was commonly known) and torment the patients in the wards. It was regarded as an entertaining spectacle.

Little interest was paid to the care of people with sick minds. Little knowledge was applied to their well-being. It was thought quite reasonable for them to be shut up alone, probably neglected and intimidated, if not treated with open cruelty. The general pattern of care was dominated by ignorance, apathy, superstition, and moral condemnation. A troublesome patient was subdued by starving, and, when in weak condition, was then sufficiently quiet for handling. Bleedings were frequent, after which the patient took vomits and was purged. This cruel medical treatment, coupled with mechanical forms of restraint, was complete and unchallenged.

In her novel 'Jane Eyre', Charlotte Bronte secreted the poor mad character of Rochester's wife, Bertha Antoinetta, alone in the care of a former madhouse attendant. In focusing the plot around Bertha Antoinetta, who had been 'put away' where her existence was unknown, Charlotte Bronte was using an established practice of her day. Wealthy people disposed of mentally deranged relatives in this way. Other alternatives were to send the lunatic to one of the small private asylums with a pledge of absolute secrecy, or, in the case of a person of some social standing, for care to be administered openly at home under medical supervision.

Pauper lunatics were the responsibility of the parish overseer, and

subject to the rigours and inconsistencies of the old Poor Law. In general there was no separation of workhouse inmates, but the exception was St Peter's workhouse, Bristol. Here pauper lunatics were kept apart from the other inmates, and it was the only establishment where they received treatment as distinct from confinement.

Medical attention was provided by surgeons and physicians of local standing who gave their services voluntarily. The policy of the Bristol Authority established a pattern which was eventually taken up throughout the country.

Almost imperceptibly, reform movements took place in the early nineteenth century. They followed a pattern. First came an indefinable sense of unease at the existing state of the institutions and conditions under which patients were confined. This sense of public concern was shown in isolated incidents and in local experiments. In time the attention of certain Members of Parliament, usually back-benchers, was attracted, and so eventually came about the reforms in the law.

Improvements and experiments were carried out by individual philanthropists and small groups of influential people. One such was Dr Edward Long Fox of Brislington House, near Bristol, who died there in 1835. During the last twenty years of the eighteenth century he was a physician with a large practice in Castle Green, Bristol, and was a surgeon at the Bristol Infirmary. He lived in Queen Square. During that time he became associated with a private lunatic asylum at Cleve Hill, Mangotsfield, first as visiting physician and afterwards as owner. This property had previously been in the hands of the Quakers, and no doubt it was on this account that Dr Fox, a strict Quaker, had been connected with it. In 1799 he purchased Brislington House, a private house used as a madhouse by the pervious owner. Dr Fox and his two sons, Drs Francis and Charles Fox, commenced the building of an establishment at Brislington House which was said to be one of the first to be specially designed for the curable, and a comfortable retreat for the incurable. Patients were first received in 1804. The following year all the patients of Cleve Hill were removed to Brislington House.

The Fox family set up their hospital in pleasant surroundings, within a well-wooded estate which provided shelter and security from intrusion. With a farm, the property extended from the then recently enclosed Brislington Common to Hicks Gate. The various buildings were surrounded by a wall, and entrance and exit were controlled so that patients were constantly attended.

Dr Fox believed that to remove a patient from the home influence was of the utmost importance, and that with exercise, fresh air, mental activity, nourishing food, and good surroundings many patients would recover. And they did. To this end, agricultural or horticultural pursuits were arranged. There was a bowling green, grounds for cricket, football, and other athletic amusements, while the ladies indulged in daily promenades. Billiards and chess were included in the indoor occupations, and there was also a library. Patients were also permitted to subscribe to the circulating library in Bristol. The Drs Fox liked patients to participate in divine service which was found to have a tranquillizing effect, so much so, that the Chaplain, also curate of the parish, often expressed his astonishment at the quietness and sobriety of the communicants. Convalescents were permitted to spend evenings within the Fox family circle so that any slight eccentricities could be observed and checked. Patients were allowed to lead as active and normal a life as possible, with their own servants to attend to their personal comforts. Several cottages were established in the grounds to accommodate aristocratic patients. In 1816 Lanesborough Cottage was built for Lord Lanesborough. Inmates in general were arranged according their rate of payment, and there was no communication between the sexes.

Forty years later, the Rev Francis Kilvert, the diarist, wrote of his visit to Brislington House in 1874, that he was agreeably taken with the fine palatial buildings and beautiful surroundings. This unsolicited testimonial goes on: 'I was called to renew my acquaintance with Mrs Hopton, the matron, who was once housekeeper at Sydney College. She accompanied us out to a fine large lawn in which stood a magnificent weeping willow. There was a high ivied wall running on three sides of this lawn and the house upon the fourth. Aunt Emma was sitting on a low seat in a sunny corner doing some work with a

cat or two on her lap'. The Rev Kilvert also mentions the personal attention which Dr Francis Fox paid to his Aunt.

There had been much opposition to the opening of the asylum, and this hostility may have been reflected in the refusal of the magistrates to allow Beaufort Villa, a semi-detached house in Durley Lane to be used as an asylum for a small number of patients by Dr Edward Long fox in 1873.

Brislington House was not cheap. Dr Fox charged 15s (75p) per week in 1822 for the care of a lunatic from Camerton. The overseers of the poor in Keynsham tried to get lunatics from Keynsham admitted, but after the building of the Workhouse in 1838 lunatics from Keynsham were sent to Box to a cheaper private asylum.

The first Dr Edward Fox seems to have been an outstanding physician, and a man of great perception and humanity. His Quaker principles directed his life. This was clearly shown by the extraordinary lengths to which he went, to return money his father had unwittingly obtained by privateering in the French wars, as the part owner of a ship. After his father's death Edward continued to try to find those who had been harmed and return the money to them. He even made a journey to Paris in 1818 to distribute the last of the money.

It was Edward Fox who purchased Knightstone Island, Weston-super-Mare. He built a causeway and a sea bathing establishment, chiefly for the use of patients from the Bristol Royal Infirmary. He is also credited with foretelling uses for electricity, telling his son 'that a time will come when by this means messages will be conveyed round the world'.

Dr Edward Fox was also invited to discuss the treatment of George III in 1811, but his advice, that the King needed contact with other human beings, and some mental activity, was in conflict with the treatment prescribed by his doctor and favoured by the Queen. So the King's treatment by isolation, restraint, and coercion continued.

Edward Fox's son and grandson were both doctors. His son, Henry Hames Fox, opened a fine asylum at Northwoods, Winterbourne, and his grandson, who married Janet Simpson, the daughter of the Vicar of Keynsham, ran Brislington House. His son Dr Edward Long Fox

continued the family tradition. In 1947 Dr Francis Elliot Fox died. His widow continued for four years, but finally sold the house in 1951. Then it had between 60 and 70 patients. The house and 25 acres of the original estate were bought by Bristol United Hospitals for a Nurses' Home.

Although it is 40 years since there was a Dr Fox at Brislington House, it is still widely known as 'Dr Fox's': a tribute to the memory of a remarkable family of doctors and their care for the insane.

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# Chandos Lodge

## Connie Smith

*This paper is based on material in the Archives of Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society, which was compiled by Mrs Connie Smith at the request of the occupiers of Chandos Lodge, September 1975. Elizabeth White and Barbara J. Lowe have helped to prepare this version for publication. A striking feature of this listed building is the ornate fireplace, surrounded by painted coats of arms. A full study of this heraldic display is outside the scope of this paper. Anyone wishing for more information should consult the papers and drawings deposited in the Archives.*

Chandos Lodge is situated at Durley Hill (NGR ST646696) on high ground above the river Avon. Its pleasant southerly aspect overlooking the Keynsham Hams and Somerdale towards Keynsham is today marred by the adjacent railway and bypass.

The Lodge seems to have acquired the prefix of 'Chandos' only since the beginning of this century. Prior to that it was called Lodge Farm. In the eighteenth century it was referred to as 'The Lodge'. Its original use in the seventeenth century by Sir Thomas Bridges was that of a modest hunting lodge.

The Bridges family of Keynsham had a great house next to the Parish Church, near to the ruins of the Augustinian Abbey. The house was demolished in or about 1776. This family purchased the estate of the Abbey following the dissolution, and Chandos Lodge lay within the estate. The name 'Chandos' became prominent after the inheritance of the Keynsham estate by the Chandos line of the family, which later became the 'Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos'.

Sir Thomas Bridges was in the middle years of his life when he formed a deer park to the west of Keynsham. Part of the pale which surrounded the park can still be seen on the high ground above the river Avon, surviving as a bank and ditch. Upon an outcrop of Pennant

sandstone he built a hunting lodge which he also called his summer house. This is the house we know today as 'Chandos Lodge'.

The building was of three storeys, and probably consisted of hall, parlour, and kitchen on the ground floor, with a small barrel-vaulted cellar beneath. On the first floor was a large and spacious apartment, with another, or others, reached by a solid oak Jacobean staircase.

The apartment mentioned had a handsome stone fireplace, surmounted by a large plaster overmantel bearing the date 1663. Charles II had recently become sovereign, following the interregnum. Sir Thomas's royalist zeal led him to honour the king by having the overmantel moulded with the Stuart coat of arms, something not uncommon in his day. The fireplace and overmantel have survived.

The Stuart royal achievement portrayed consists of the arms of England and France in the first and fourth grand quarters, with the lion rampant for Scotland in the second, and the Irish harp in the third. The supporters are represented by a gold-crowned lion and a collared and chained unicorn, the latter having replaced the red dragon of the Tudors. Flanking the whole can be seen the Prince of Wales' feathers and the thistle, while on either side at the top appear the initials C.R. The fireplace has a carved stone surround with Tudor arch. The centre shield is charged with the Bridges/Rodney arms.

The union between the Bridges and Rodney families in 1639 was a highly fruitful and advantageous one. By his marriage with Anna Rodney, Sir Thomas Bridges added considerably to the family fortune. He was proud to impale the three eagles coat of arms on the dexter side of his own shield, as the Rodney family had noble antecedents. This is the reason why Sir Thomas was pleased to have painted the heraldic murals on each side of the fireplace in his Hunting Lodge or Summer House. Originally it is said there were many achievements displayed upon the walls of the apartment chamber. There were also two large paintings, one being of Catherine of Braganza, wife and widow of Charles II. Today only five coats of arms remain.

Plaster mantelpieces of the type found at Chandos Lodge are not uncommon, but most are west of the river Parrett where a centre of the craft is thought to have been (Vivian-Neal 1951). One good

example of the craft is at Poundisford Park. This belonged to the Symes family, into which a sister of Sir Thomas Bridges, Amy (or Ann), had married in 1640. Had Sir Thomas been impressed by the plaster work in his sister's house? Today the plaster work appears very dark because it has been varnished many times.

The sash windows remaining in the house are very interesting. They are set flush with the walls and are not recessed into the stone work. This would indicate a date prior to 1709, when Parliament required the windows of a building to be recessed with an external sill to reduce fire risk. However, they cannot have been built with the house in 1663, so it seems that the house was altered quite early on. This was possibly about 1706, when Sir Thomas died and his brother Harry inherited the property.

The house and the park which surrounded it are shown on several maps of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. In 1858 Lodge Farm, as it was then known, was bought by Edwin Newman of Yeovil and the centuries-old link with Keynsham Abbey estate was broken. It then passed through several hands. At one point it was tenanted by the Radnorshire Polo and Riding Pony Company Limited.

Originally the house had a lofty seclusion, with a dominating view of the entire town. The first disturbance to its peace came with the opening of the Great Western Railway in 1840. Then in the 1960s came the bypass. Now the house stands marooned beyond a pair of embankments, still with a lofty view, but with a mushroom growth of industrial buildings behind it. It has been divided into two dwellings, most unsympathetically. Sir Thomas's magnificent fireplace, in what was obviously the principal room, is now in a passage with a dividing wall between the two dwellings across the room. Metal framed windows have been inserted. The tenants are only able to decorate their respective parts. The owner seems unwilling to maintain the property as befits its history, although the building is listed. It is sad to see such a house so shabbily treated.

## Appendix: The Coats of Arms

No.1 shows on the dexter side the three displayed eagles of the Rodney family. The sinister side shows many antecedents of the Rodney family, including Southwell, Tendering, Barclay, Wychingham, Raby, Mandeville, Warren, de Clare, Despencer.

No.2 shows on the dexter side a double-headed eagle (possibly Speke), with a triple-towered castle, and five fleurs-de-lys on the sinister side (possibly Somester). [Alternatively, the whole may represent the arms of Humphrey Walrond, 1600-1670.]

No.3 is similar to the achievement on the tomb of Henry Bridges (died 1587) in the chancel of Keynsham Parish Church. The families displayed in the quarterings are thought to be Hungerford, Heitesbury, Hussey, Peverill, Cornwall, Cobham, Courtney, Botreux, Molens, Burnell, Botetourt, and Breston.

No.4 has the quarterings of the Bridges, with those of Chandos and Berkeley. The crest shows the Bridges' Turk's headpiece and helm.

No.5 has the arms of the Bridges and Rodney family, with a shield of the Wyndham family in escutcheon. The crest shows the Bridges' Turk's headpiece and helm.

## References

Vivian-Neal, A.W., 1951, 'Tudor and Stuart Plasterwork in Somerset', *Proceedings, Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society*, 96, 143-51.

# The J. N. Fear Institute

## S. Swain

*The following historical account of the Institute has been compiled from documents, newspaper cuttings and manuscript notes made by Mr Kenneth Gibbons, first Secretary/Treasurer of the Management Committee and later a Trustee, made available by Mr Jonathan Gibbons, present Treasurer and Trustee; documents in the J. N. Fear Institute Deed Box by courtesy of Mr W. Bowes Taylor, Solicitor and Trustee; Minute Books from 27 January 1948 to date (June 1981); and from information supplied by Mr B. Ivor Day, Architect of the Institute.*

The donor of the Institute was John Nelson Fear, who was born on 2 August 1839. He married Sarah Anne Baker on 7 July 1862, at the parish church, Walcot, Somerset. The marriage certificate shows that at that time he was a Plumber and Glazier, the son of Samuel Fear also a Plumber and his wife was the daughter of Thomas Baker, Victualler.

In later life he became Secretary of the Keynsham Gas Company, whose premises were in Dapps Hill, Keynsham, and also Clerk to the Parish Council of Keynsham. He was a typical Victorian gentlemen, being described by Mr C. H. Abbot, one of his Executors, as a man of strong character, outspoken and exceedingly tenacious. With his voluntary duties and his public work, Mr Abbott contended that Mr Fear had touched all spheres of village activity. Cricket had typified his life, and had demonstrated that he was neither spectacular nor brilliant but a man of integrity and a plodder. When he played cricket he was a 'stone-waller'. He never hit a boundary and his score mounted by ones and twos. He was rarely bowled but generally caught.

He had strong religious convictions, being a member of the Victoria Methodist Church where he was the Leader of a Bible Class for young men.

He died on 18 May 1917, and by his Will he appointed P. F. Gibbons, A. F. Gibbons, Charles Frederick Whittuck (Solicitor), and Charles Henry Abbott to be his Executors and Trustees.

After various bequests he bequeathed his real estate and the residue of his personal estate to his Trustees Upon Trust for the benefit of his wide during her lifetime and then, after paying certain other legacies, to hold the remainder to pay and apply the same in founding, establishing, providing, furnishing, and equipping premises in the Parish of Keynsham in the name of J. N. Fear Institute to be used in perpetuity for the purpose of reading, entertainment, meeting, and recreation rooms and club for the use of the residents in the Parish of Keynsham and otherwise for the benefit and enjoyment of inhabitants of the said Parish provided that the Institute should not be used for any political purposes whatsoever.

At the time of his death he was the owner of two houses, Nos. 30 and 32 High Street, Keynsham, and No.30 became the site of the Institute.

Mrs S. A. Fear died in 1922, and the value of the residuary estate then amounted to £6,000. Orders of the Charity Commissioners dated 12 October 1923 and 4 December 1925 established the status of the Institute as a Charity.

The Trustees were faced with the dilemma of building a cheap hall or of investing the money and obtaining more capital. They decided on the latter course, and that was the reason why many people in Keynsham had thought that the Institute was a dream that would never come true.

The capital grew to £9,500 and the Trustees then commissioned a young architect, Mr B. Ivor Day, to prepare plans for the building of the Institute. Mr Day still maintains a special interest in the Institute, acting as consultant architect, and his help was particularly appreciated when the roofing timbers were found to have wet rot in 1979.

Building commenced in 1935, but the opening ceremony, performed by Captain R. A. Norman of Bristol Y.M.C.A., was not held until 7 April 1937 when it was reported that the hall was filled and many reluctantly had to be refused admission.

At that time the Lounge was equipped as a reading room with newspapers and magazines at the disposal of members, and the room above it was a games room equipped with two full sized billiard tables and other games.

The subscription for members 16 to 18 was 2/6d (12.5p) and over 18 5/- (25p) per annum.

The building had cost £5,500, and after the provision of equipment and for a caretaker, the amount left to provide an Endowment was only £2,427. This Endowment Fund is held by the Charity Commissioners who pay over to the Trustees the annual income.

On 25 January 1937 the Trustees adopted a Constitution and Rules approved by the Charity Commissioners, under which the management of the Institute was entrusted to 4 Trustees and 12 Members, 4 to be appointed by the Trustees and 8 to be elected by ballot at the Annual General Meeting, the first of which was held in January 1938.

At that time the only survivor of the original Trustees was Charles Abbott, and serving with him were F. G. Whittuck (Solicitor), C. R. Willoughby, G. E. Chappell, and Dr Claude Harrison. Other gentlemen who served as Trustees were H. G. Exon (Chairman 1948-55), K. H. Gibbons (son of an original Trustee; first Secretary/Treasurer; Chairman 1957-62), Norman Down (Chairman 1969), R. Harris (Secretary 1947-73), and H. J. Cosway.

The present Trustees are Edward J. Cannock (Chairman), W. Bowes Taylor (Solicitor), Jonathan Gibbons (Treasurer; whose father and grandfather were Trustees), and H. J. Groves (Secretary).

In September 1939 the Institute was requisitioned for use as a First Aid Post, but at the end of that year, mainly through the efforts of the Y.M.C.A., the building was released for use by Members of H. M. Forces and at the same time membership was still open to residents in Keynsham. During the six years that followed the Institute was the principal place in this District where the soldiers and A.T.S. stationed in the area spent their leisure hours, and during most of those years the capacity of the building was strained to its utmost, and the Canteen which was run by a band of voluntary helpers acquired a great reputation among those who were stationed here and also those who

passed through Keynsham.

In May 1946 it was considered that the time had arrived when the Institute should revert to its normal use 'to be of benefit to the inhabitants of Keynsham'. With that object in view a public meeting was held on Thursday, 23 May, when it was hoped by that means interest in the Institute would be stimulated and that the various activities which had centred round it before the war would begin again.

The response was apathetic; the premises had deteriorated in the eye of the public; nobody appeared to want to use it; and there was little money to pay for its upkeep. At the Annual General Meeting in 1951 it was reported there had been a loss on the previous year of £70 and the funds in hand amounted to £45 despite expenditure having been cut to the minimum. Members were warned that unless there was an improvement the Institute would have to close at the end of that year.

A Special General Meeting to consider the future of the Institute was held on 25 October 1951, when various proposals were considered. Two members, a Mr Small and a Mr Stokes, undertook to organise a canvas of residents and a collection of money, and this enabled the Institute to carry on for a time.

The Management Committee had not had the necessary funds with which to employ a caretaker, and had had to rely on voluntary workers to act as Stewards. There had been difficulties, and at a meeting of the Management Committee in November 1954 the following resolution was passed:

'Owing to the lack of interest which is taken in the Institute and to the fact that elected members of the Management Committee have failed to attend committee meeting and had taken no part in the running of the Institute, the Trustees and Officers regret that as from January 1st next the Institute will be closed.

The Hall will be available for letting as before and arrangements will be made for the use of the Institute if it is desired by any responsible association for any educational or recreational purpose (such as billiards, etc.).

It is felt that until such time as the Institute is in a position to appoint

a full time steward the use of the Institute must be restricted to responsible associations who are willing to take proper care of the premises and to contribute toward the expenses of maintaining the Institute.'

In the same year the Somerset County Council made alterations to the lighting in the hall to enable it to be used as the Keynsham V. C. School, but this usage ceased in 1958 with the consequent loss of income.

At the same time a Youth Club, formed in 1955 at a meeting originally sponsored by the Keynsham Urban District Council, also closed down.

From 1953 to 1956 a Mr Nurcombe had held Old Time Dancing classes on Monday evenings and also monthly Saturday dances, but lack of support had caused their closure.

Consequently, the financial situation of the Institute was not a happy one, and the Management Committee sought the assistance of Mr Oscar Frith, and it was reported to the Management Committee that he felt he had a strong enough following to form an Old Time Dance Club.

He organised a dance on 12 September and 32 of those attending became members of the Institute and formed the Keynsham Old Time Dance Club which commenced functioning on Tuesday 16 September 1958 and still continues. Under the guidance of Mr Frith the Club flourished and helped to provide much needed financial support.

At this time the hall floor was in a bad state and when the Management Committee decided to replace it with the present maple floor at a cost of £286 the Old Time Dance Club undertook to subscribe £150 over three years but did so within two years, and the Women's Institute made a loan of £200 free of interest.

In February 1962 Mr Frith was elected Chairman of the Management Committee and remained in office until his untimely death in September 1968. Through him the Old Time Dance Club in 1966 provided the labour to redecorate the main hall.

In 1960 the billiard tables required extensive renovation, the cost of

which could not be justified in view of the small amount of income they generated. By clearing this room it was thought it could be used to greater advantage by the various organisations affiliated. This was done and at the present time it is in use every night of the week.

The Women's Institute commenced using the premises in 1953, since when it has made special efforts towards maintaining the Institute which it now regards as its Home. In 1957 it supplied 20 new card tables, still in use; in 1958 it installed a new toilet adjoining the dressing rooms and stage for the use of artistes, and also supplied new hall curtains which it again renewed in 1975 in conjunction with redecoration. In addition it has made monetary grants from the proceeds of their pantomimes.

The Townswomen's Guild also commenced using the premises in 1955 and this year in celebration made a gift of new curtains for the Lounge.

The Rotary Club which used the premises for their weekly luncheons from 1958 to 1979 and other affiliated organisations have also from time to time contributed their donations to the maintenance of the Institute.

In 1962 in connection with the plans to widen Charlton Road and redevelop the site, the Institute agreed to cede the right of way from Charlton Road, and to accept the replacement of dressing rooms on that side of the stage for the present rooms on the other side.

Heating of the Institute has been an expensive problem over the years. The original coke heating boiler was converted to gas, but restored to solid fuel in 1948. In September 1955 a new boiler had to be fitted at a cost of £230. In 1966 this was converted to oil firing, oil at that time being a cheaper source of fuel, at a cost of £150 plus labour. In 1974 this broke down and was replaced by a modern oil fired unit at a cost of £589, to which was added last year a circulating pump to increase its efficiency. This depleted the reserve fund.

Further improvements were needed in order to maintain the standard of the Institute, but the income from hirings had fallen and at the Annual General Meeting in 1975 members were warned that unless the reserve could be rapidly replaced and the income increased the

Institute would be in difficulties and in fact could cease to exist within two years.

After considering various ways and means of raising the essential funds the Management Committee decided to establish a separate Fund Raising Committee with Mrs V. Pillinger of the Ladies Club as chairman. In three years it raised £1,500, which enabled the Management Committee to make essential improvements in the ladies and gentlemen's cloakrooms and toilet accommodation both on the ground floor and on the upper floor.

These improvements brought their own rewards in the improved public image and increased use of the premises not only by affiliated organisations but also for private parties, wedding receptions, ballet school, stamp fairs, market research, etc., with the resulting increase in income.

After a period of intense activity with much of the work falling on the same people with commitments to their own organisations, there is a tendency to become stale in fund raising ideas and as the immediate object of the Committee had been achieved it was felt that with increases in subscriptions and hiring charges it should be possible to maintain the Institute adequately. It was therefore decided to suspend these activities and give the members time to recuperate from their strenuous efforts.

Unfortunately, however, these hopes were soon shattered when it was discovered that wet rot had penetrated the roofing timbers of the main hall. The defective portions had to be replaced and the whole of the roof timbers given specialist treatment to prevent further trouble in this direction. The cost of this work together with the other improvements absorbed a total of £2,688 and so once again the reserves were depleted.

Estimates were obtained for work on flat roofs on portions of the premises, but the Management Committee had to postpone thought of this until such time as sufficient funds were available.

The Management Committee therefore decided this year to re-activate the Fund Raising Committee with Mrs Edna Birt of the Women's Institute as Chairman and representatives from the affiliated organisa-

tions which comprise the Arts Society, Chess Club, Gardeners' Association, Gramophone Society, Ladies Club, Old Time Dance Club, Over Sixties Cheerful Club, Federation of Old Age Pensioners, Photographic Club, Rotary, Townswomen's Guild, Women's Institute, Whist Club, and Wine Circle.

To make a start in restoring the financial reserves an Autumn Fair has been organised to take place in the Institute on Saturday 25 October 1980, when it is hoped there will be a good response from the public.

## Trustees

| Appointed | | Died |
|---|---|---|
| By Will | Philip Frome Gibbons, JP | 10 October 1927 |
| | Augustus From Gibbons | 14 June 1929 |
| | Charles Frederick Whittuck | 9 April 1923 |
| | Charles Henry Abbott | 30 September 1956 |
| 3 March 1926 | Francis Gerald Whittuck | 1 September 1964 |
| 22 Nov. 1930 | George Edwin Chappell | 25 June 1950 |
| | Charles Richards Willoughby | 23 May 1937 |
| | Claude Charles Harrison | 21 February 1957 |
| 29 Jan. 1947 | Kenneth Henry Gibbons | 6 June 1978 |
| 11 April 1957 | Wilfrid Bowes Taylor | 1 November 1985 |
| | Norman Henry Down | 26 December 1969 |
| | Henry Ellis James Cosway | 8 September 1964 |
| 14 Oct. 1965 | Raymond Frank Harris | 7 April 1973 |
| | Edward John Cannock | |
| 4 Sept. 1978 | Jonathan Gibbons | |
| | Henry John Irving Groves | |
| 19 March 1987 | Reginald Holmes | |
| | Norman Henry James | |

## Chairmen of Management Committee

| | |
|---|---|
| 1937-1948 | Charles Henry Abbott |
| Feb 1948 - May 1955 | Herbert George Exon |
| May 1955 - Feb 1957 | Claude Charles Harrison |
| Mar 1957 - Feb 1962 | Kenneth Henry Gibbons |

| | |
|---|---|
| Feb 1962 - Aug 1968 | Oscar George Herbert Frith |
| Sep 1968 - Dec 1969 | Norman Henry Down |
| Mar 1970 | Edward John Cannock |

## Addendum: January 1990

Wilfrid Bowes Taylor died on 1 November 1985, and on 19 March 1987 Reginald Holmes and Norman Henry James were appointed as Trustees. Of the 14 affiliated organisations existing in 1981, the Arts Society and Whist Club ceased to exist due to lack of support; the Gramophone Society wished to alter their evening and could not be accommodated, so moved to the Public Library; the Ladies Club is now named the Ladies Evening Group, the Old Age Pensioners Club and the Women's Institute had to cease functioning as they could not find members to fill the positions of Officers and Members of Committees, but the Women's Institute Market still continues.

Additional organisations which have become affiliate are the Kobushi Judo Club, Somerdale Players, Commercial Vehicle Road Transport Club, and the Keynsham Branch of Cancer Research.

Other organisations regularly use the Institute but are not affiliated.

## Officers of Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society

## 1989-90

*Chairman:* Charles Browne
30 Walden Road, Keynsham; Tel; 863116
*Vice--Chairman:* Elizabeth White
200 Wellsway, Keynsham; Tel: 863918
*Hon. Secretary:* Eric Linfield, MA MEd
6 Camerton Close, Saltford; Tel: Bath 873051
*Hon. Treasurer:* Sue Trude
17 Westfield Close, Keynsham; Tel: 862319
*Hon. Archivist:* Margaret Whitehead
16 West View Road, Keynsham
*Hon. Photographic Archivist:* Len Coggins
26 Waveney Road, Keynsham; Tel: 864279
*Minuting Secretary:* John Dunford
3 Copse Road, Saltford

### Committee:

Joan Day, Hunters Hill, Oakfield Road, Keynsham
Mary Fairclough, 14 Mayfields, Keynsham
M. C. Fitter, 6 Avon Road, Keynsham
Mrs B. J. Lowe, BA Cert.Ed, FSA, 37 Manor Road, Keynsham
Pam Moore, 37 Minsmere Road, Keynsham

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