NORTH WANSDYKE

PAST

AND

PRESENT

Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society

No. 6, 1994

North Wansdyke

Past and Present

Journal of Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society

Editor: Charles Browne
Telephone: Bristol (0272) 863116

Contents

Published by

Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society

No. 6, 1994

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Mr Michael C. Fitter, 6 Avon Road, Keynsham, Bristol

Price to non-members £1.50

Memories of Upton Cheyney, 1914-1939

Jack Allen

Upton Cheyney is a village in the parish of Bitton, which was in Gloucestershire until the County of Avon was formed in the seventies by the annexation of north Somerset and south Gloucestershire. The village lies against the hillside, roughly between the 200 and 350ft contour lines, where the southernmost part of the Cotswold plateau descends from nearly 800ft to the plain of the Bristol Avon.

I was born there a few weeks before the outbreak of the First World War and, apart from being away at school, lived there until, for the second time this country declared war on Germany.

A few new houses have been built; otherwise the village has remained virtually unchanged in more than a hundred years. Electricity was supplied in the early thirties—we used oil lamps and went to bed by candle light. Mains sewerage came some forty years later. Impossible to railways and inaccessible to buses, it has never been served by public transport. Although their surfaces have been smoothed and tarred, the roads have not been straightened or widened, except that an exceptionally steep part of the road up from Bitton was abandoned, and a new one, not so steep, was built to wind round the hillside.

Almost all the houses and cottages were built of stone and stood in no particular order, some near the road and others set back. I can think of two exceptions, a row of brick-built cottages at the bottom of Brewery Hill and another two at the top. One of the larger buildings in the village was the school. It was opened in 1894, and at one time had over one hundred pupils, coming as they did from Beach and from North Stoke, Swinford and Kelston Mills—these last three places in Somerset. Sadly the school closed in 1981, having fewer than ten pupils.

Upton House was the largest dwelling house, and its gardens looked out over the Avon valley below. There was also a house called Chetwynds whose title deeds were said to go back several centuries. There were three larger farmhouses, one of which had a dovecote in a nearby field. Adjoining the wall of it was a saw-pit, no longer used and we children were not encouraged to explore it.

Another building of note was the Independent Chapel, having the date 1834 carved in the stonework above the entrance. In the building

were a school room and lodging for a teacher. To this day there are, I believe, one or two school desks of the time still there. West of the building is a graveyard, somewhat unkempt but so quiet and at peace that whenever I go there I recall the last paragraph of *Wuthering Heights*.

> "I lingered around them [three headstones] under that benign sky, watched the moths fluttering among the heath and harebells, listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass, and wondered how anyone could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth."

There was also the public house. As a small child I used to go there once a year to a birthday party, but I had no knowledge of the bar. It was a dark house, selling, I think only beer and cider, but I'm sure that a notice board proclaimed a licence to sell, among other things "porter, to be consumed on the premises". Porter, as far as I can make out was a heavy dark brown beer. I was always a little unhappy that the place had no name or swinging sign. Bitton had the "White Hart" and the "Rising Sun", Swinford had "The Swan" and Kelston "The Crown", but we were the "Upton Inn".

The most used road from Bitton, because it was shorter, was by way of Brewery Hill, steep, narrow and twisted. There really was a small brewery almost at the bottom of the hill, but it closed about 1920. There was a longer way with even more bends but not quite to steep. It came through Golden Valley, wound past Chetwynds, through the Hollow and along the Level to the Green where it met the other road. The Green was a small triangle of grass and a misnomer. The Hollow was a cutting, and the Level one hundred yards of the only level road in the village. The names are retained by signs erected by the local authority.

We rarely used the roads to Bitton. The cinder path through the fields was shorter. You went down through the Rookery to get to the first field. I never knew the rooks to gather there, but perhaps they did once. Through a stone wicket and you were soon past the oak tree planted for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

From the Green the road went up until just before the school it forked. The left fork was a narrow road that took you to Beach, Monument Hill and on to Lansdown. The right fork, now a "No Through Road", also led to Lansdown, but it was deeply rutted and became a track beyond the cottage where old Mrs Jenkins lived with her two sons. This track crossed Cowgrove, a great uneven field, white with hawthorn at the end of May, until it came out on the Lansdown plateau

and the fringes of the golf course where, if you were lucky, you could find a lost ball. The road as far as the cottage is tarred now, and there is a post-war house just before the oak with the magnificent gallows limb. This lane to Lansdown led in Spring to banks of violets and primroses, fields of cowslips and hedges of nesting birds; in Summer to wild roses, distant views and cooler air; in Autumn to ripe red berries and Old Man's Beard; and in Winter to rime and frost and deep lying snow.

Near the Green was the fountain. We always called it the "fountain", but it was only a meagre flow of probably impure water from a steel pipe. There was a trough for animals (also used to test Wellington boots) and a metal cup for human use. It was a never-ending source of pleasure to stem the flow with the palm of your hand in the hope that you could store up enough pressure to send the water upon its release out beyond the basin into the road. Carved in the stone above the pipe was the legend "Rebuilt 1912". When I last saw it the fountain was waterless and derelict.

Nearby was the road to Pipley. Most of Pipley was forbidden to us, but the lane also led to the footpath to North Stoke, and best of all, the brook. This was a stream that rose on Lansdown and ran down the hill through Swinford to the Avon, marking the boundary between Gloucestershire and Somerset. It was a lure to us, as all water is for children. It was not deep and we were allowed there as long as we did not come home with wet and muddy shoes. It goes without saying that we often did. You could dam the brook, sail toy boats on it and paddle in it.

We were fortunate indeed to live at Upton in such beautiful country. Badgers, foxes, stoats and rabbits all lived near. The nightingales sang, the owls cried and cuckoos called in their seasons. There were ponds with newts and frogs and dragon flies, trees to climb and apples to plunder. Farmer Griffin once said in desperation "Boys is boys, and apples is apples". There were conkers to find, and walnuts, and endless delights were ours. I can still remember the scent of new mown hay, early on a glorious morning in June.

I thoroughly enjoyed my days at the village school, and found everything we did to be of absorbing interest. With no talent at all I drew and painted imaginary maps, and you could colour most of the world in British Empire red in those days. I liked the counties of the British Isles most of all. They had wonderfully irregular boundaries and there were enough of them to use every colour and mixture in the whole paint box.

I read whatever I could find, including those pious moralistic children's' stories so beloved of the Victorians. Always some poor child, although displaying the utmost fortitude during a cruel life, would be overtaken by an early death. Ill housed, ill nourished and without the benefits of modern medicine, the Victorians lived in the midst of childhood death. I liked Grimm better than Andersen and was of course delighted by Robinson Crusoe and Swiss Family Robinson, and all books about exploration. Boys' books were being written, too, about the recent Great War, with titles like *With the Tanks at the Front*. I suppose that I must have spent, especially in the winter, most of my spare time in reading. There was no television and I don't think there was a radio in the house until the mid twenties.

As the days grew longer after the winter, we went out to play and I recall once magic Spring when the evenings were warm and full of the promise of the Summer to come. Our games would rigidly follow in their proper seasons: marbles, whip-tops, hoops, conkers and more.

Although I was not particularly robust, neither was I a weakling, but I was inclined to look on at the escapades of the "devil may care" boys rather than take part in them. There was, and doubtless still is, at the entrance to a field called "Plain Cleaves" a stone-built circular drain about the length of a cricket pitch and large enough to admit a boy. If you would brave the dark, not worry about frogs or snakes that might be there, count on the structure not falling in, and crawl from one end to the other, you had successfully dealt with the biggest dare there was.

A particularly malevolent inspiration on one occasion was to stir up a wasps nest in a bank with a long stick, run like mad and watch the infuriated insects sting Happy Sid. He was a morose and belligerent character, who loved us not, and whose coming had been carefully watched and signalled. There was a story in the village that boys of an earlier generation had hung an aborted piglet over one of the cottage doors, doubtless as an act of revenge. There was something of a fuss about it and a hunt for the culprits. "Tweren't our Bert" said one old grandmother, "he were brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord". From what we gather, though, Bert had something to do with it.

I have many memories of the village school. What a great pleasure it was to be able to write the date 22.2.22. They won't be able to write as many similar figures in the date until the next century, and then they'll be able to write the maximum of six—11.11.11. We had a splendid primary education, at least I had, from the day we traced three

walking sticks in the sand tray to form the letter "m" until I left the schoolroom for the last time to go away to school in 1925.

Before I left I had read, or partly read, as did the others, several of Scott's novels, *Pevril of the Peak*, *Rob Roy* and *Woodstock* among them (though why not the more appealing crusading Waverley novels I do not know). We read *King Lear*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*—we even acted a little of that—*The Tempest* and the *Merchant of Venice*. We read and learnt some of Rupert Brooke's poem, *The Great Lover*.

There were one or two subnormal children, but the rest of us knew the multiplication tables, could write legibly and spell, and knew something of fractions and decimals. I can't help thinking that we had a better grounding in the "three Rs" than many children are getting today.

I must have shown some promise, and at some stage the headmistress, Agnes Walley, to whom I owe an immense debt for my early education, which laid so well the foundation of my later one, suggested that I ought to attempt some examination for a secondary school. I reflect as I write, that I was never again to enjoy such ease of learning.

The house we lived in—we did not own it but were tenants—was called *Humberstone* but the name was never used. It was built of stone and I think the ground floor was flagged. I imagine that it was built in the early part of the nineteenth century. From the road you climbed several steps, passed between two fir trees, walked up a stone path and came to a porch over the front door. Inside and ahead of you was a dark passage leading to the stairs and to the back of the house. On the left was the village shop, with a sack of sugar, a barrel of vinegar, a round of cheese, a box of butter and all the other usual groceries. Looking back I see that the place was untidy and would not have conformed to today's regulations for the handling of food! It had a turnover of about £30 a month and was in competition with the "Co-op" which delivered at slightly lower prices. The room on the right was the "front" room. I don't think the words "parlour" or "lounge" were ever used in the village. Every house or cottage had a "front" room, furnished to a better standard than the others, but cold and little used. In spite of best Radstock coal costing only £2 a ton the house was bitterly cold in winter.

There were four bedrooms upstairs, the front two of reasonable size but the two at the back were low ceilinged and small. As a small child I remember spending a few winter weeks in one of the front bedrooms, confined there to cure me of croup, whooping cough or some other congestion. In spite of a fire in the grate it was bitterly cold. I re-

member being tall enough to look through the window to see flood water over the Avon meadows one wet January, and again I remember the cold.

We normally lived in the "back" kitchen. Why "back" I do not know for there was no other. It was a small ill-lit room with a small range. I am not too sure of the source of our water supply but I suspect that cattle were never far away from it. It came to us by an outside tap that we shared with the house next door. On frosty mornings our neighbour, whose menfolk rose early, had already melted the ice in the pipe by burning a newspaper. There was no kitchen sink nor flush lavatory, nor washbasin nor bath. There was a tin tub for a bath before the fire and washing up was done in an enamel bowl with soda for a detergent.

I think we had a radio in the mid twenties powered by a lead acid accumulator and a large dry battery. It was fairly primitive but you could get the dance bands on it. Later, when the electricity supply came we had a mains set—very superior.

The newspaper we took was the *Daily Chronicle* that later became the *News Chronicle* and even that I think does not now exist. I think I had a comic of my own but I borrowed many more. I can't remember their names now, but I do remember the *Children's' Newspaper* which I read more thoroughly than I read the daily paper today.

Sunday was observed and everyone had some best clothes to wear. I can see now that it provided an opportunity for the adults to dress up. The children were not interested. You couldn't play games in your best clothes and you couldn't play games on Sunday. Not every family went to church or chapel and some even dared to do some gardening.

There was a fair sized garden attached to the house, big enough to accommodate several apple trees, vegetable plots, flower borders and a pen of fowls. We always called them "fowls" and never "chickens". I particularly remember a pear tree, white with blossom in spring, where the local song birds sang their hearts out as dawn began to show.

I don't think there were any "bad" people in the village. Everyone was law abiding or managed to be seen to be so. The odd couple had to get married, but I did not know of any cruelty or infidelity although some may have existed. I don't remember a divorce or a broken home.

There were of course some characters. Liza Coles was an old woman who drove a donkey cart. She was terribly disfigured and we children were frightened of her and avoided the poor woman. Joseph Hook carried coal in his cart and if you hung on the back of it you

could be certain that he would throw some of his load at you. He was said to have slipped and injured his jaw earlier in his life, and thereafter his speech was well nigh unintelligible. Sarah Wilson was a guardian of morals and would know of any transgressions, except apparently those of her daughter who strayed. Few people could walk down past the public house without seeing the curtains stir as Mrs Bush kept an eye on them.

Then there was the Walker family, all four but "tenpence in the shilling". They had relatives at Kelston Mills whom they used to visit regularly. They made a brave sight as they shuffled in line astern on their way through the village. Farmer Griffin's wife was never seen, and indeed would have gone through life unnoticed but that she bore a son in her early forties, being quite unaware, it was said, of her pregnancy. Nor must I forget Moses Clark whose dialect and other language were superb. It was a delight to hear him describe his encounters with the foreman at 'Oot'ns Quar at Wick where he worked for some time. Joby Pullen was both illiterate and innumerate. He walked with a stick to support a grotesquely bent leg. He couldn't tell the time, and to ask him what it was invariably produced the answer "Ax me arse". He would see a "zircus" round the moon, shaved with a "razzer" and had a neighbour who was in the "calvatry" in the war. Annie Amblin was a good hearted woman whose sayings were memorable: "Mrs Cose (Coles) come yesterday, she do always come yesterday"; "sobbing wet" for "sodden"; and she referred to her husband as "my man" or our "Ill". His name was Eli. She usually had in her wash house a great earthenware pan and in it a brew seething with bacterial activity to make wine. Her cottage was small and her front door opened directly into the living room. There above the tasselled mantelpiece was a picture of Edward VII and Alexandria flanked by union jacks. Miss Caple, I think her name was Amelia, drank a bottle of stout each night at home. We know because the pub children carried the cargo, and we were surprised to learn that women could drink beer. Fat Frank Williams lived with his two genteel sisters, at least they were more genteel than he. He was a carter and enjoyed his beer, which necessitated his relieving himself from time to time. I may be wrong about this but I believe that the law about committing a nuisance was kind enough to recognise that a carter could not leave his horse, so he was guilty of no offence as he stood by one of the wheels. Albert Hook is to be remembered if only for his "cri de coeur". Referring to his mother's attitude to his brothers and sisters he would say bitterly "Tis hour poor Hike, hour

poor Maud, hour poor Hada, but never nern a word about hour poor Halb". Abe (pronounced Aby by us all) Bryan was a wheelwright, carpenter and undertaker. He lived with his mother who was mamma. Her dentures did not fit and the schoolboys found that if they plagued her a bit the top set would fall and her admonition was unintelligible. Abe was a kind hearted man but not a craftsman and often he was heard to say, "Bugger, bugger, that's good enough, that'll do". In his undertaking capacity he once ordered a coffin plate that gave the wrong age of the corpse and this was not noticed until the funeral procession was about to move off. He placed the largest wreath he could find over the plate, and there it must lie to this day six feet below, but wrong, in the churchyard at Bitton. Albert Lucker and his wife Annie lived next door to us. He was a gentle and quiet man, and a gardener all his life. Annie had few opinions of her own and would say "Father do fancy that we'm going to have rain".

There were two other men who, although they did not live at Upton, were very important to us. I can see Frank Beer, even now, in my mind's eye. He was a postman of the old school, in smart uniform, and a hat with a shiny peak behind and before. He came to Upton from Bitton twice each day in all weathers, and his round included Beach and the outlying farms right up to Lansdown. He must have cycled many thousands of miles. He was a keen bell ringer and maybe each revolution of his pedals swung a great bell in his mind as it coursed through the method he liked best.

The other man was Thomas Aubrey MD. I do not think that he ever rested and certainly seemed to have no time to send an account of his fees. A most dedicated man, he would still be on his rounds at eight or nine at night.

I have written nothing of my own family or indeed of my own contemporaries, most of whom have left the village and many of whom are dead. I lived there in an age of change, as I suppose are all ages. Motor vehicles were beginning to play a part in our lives but television had not come. Vacuum cleaners, washing machines and detergents had not reached us. Were men and women and children quieter, kinder and more honest in those days? I do not know. At any rate I enjoyed life and look back upon it with affection.

The 'Slipper Well' at 32 Temple Street, Keynsham

Michael C. Fitter, RKC Cert.Ed.

1. Discovery

In February 1993 Mr H. J. Paget applied for planning permission to develop 20-32 Temple Street. In accordance with Avon County Planning Policy, he financed the obligatory archaeological evaluation of the site carried out at the end of March 1993. Adrian Parry's evaluation (*Avon SMR 9500*, April 1993) of the one week's excavation concluded that, "the archaeological evaluation of the area to the rear of 20-32 Temple Street has identified stratified and well-preserved evidence of medieval occupation within Temple Court (and to a lesser extent to the rear of 20 Temple Street) which is likely to be adversely affected by the proposed development". Despite this, permission was given to develop the site.

At the rear of number 32, Mr Paget has placed thick metal bars above ground level, thus leaving the site below virtually undisturbed. He wrote to me, explaining that, 'the method of building above-ground without damaging underground is by using 12 inch universal beams (often called RSJs) under the walls, encased in concrete. This concrete extends over the whole floor area and is reinforced with heavy steel mesh'. In mid-August 1993 the front wheel of his tractor involved in levelling the site disturbed a short path of loosely arranged stones,

Fig.1. Margaret Whitehead tidying the top of the well soon after it was uncovered.

which revealed the uncovered well below it. Later Mr Paget mentioned his discovery to Mrs Margaret Whitehead, the archivist of Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society, who kindly advised me of the find.

2. Description of the Well

The depth of the well is 112in (9ft 4in). Though this is slightly deeper than the 86in Roman well at Cadbury's, the Slipper Well is still far shallower than the 22ft one at Oxfam in the High Street, which is on the same level. Many wells average a depth of some 30ft. Perhaps the shallowness of the Slipper Well points to an early date for its construction, when the water table was higher than when some of the deeper wells were dug.

At its lowest depth, the well was not round. There its narrowest diameter was 36in, and its widest 48in. As the well went up it narrowed into a cone shape to a perfectly round well mouth of just 30in. Most wells simply have straight sides.

The builders used the abundant lias limestone on which Keynsham is built. Normally, oblong stones of the right size were placed side by side, layer by layer. However, in this well each stone was cut with a slight concave curve, so that the well had an outstandingly smooth inner surface. The chip marks are clearly visible on most of the stones, though the marks on some are worn smooth. The only other well in Keynsham to be built to this standard is the shallow gem at Milward Lodge, St Ladoc Road.

The bottom layer of stones is placed on thick layers of irregularly shaped limestone bedrock, some three feet thick, whose distorted shapes circle the well. There is a large fissure in the rocks on the NW and NE sides, more than a foot wide, which tapers out of sight into a point some two feet in. The earth clinging to the sides of the well, and that deposited at the well bottom, is a dark humic loam "probably representing a substantial accumulation of garden soil" (Parry 1993, 6). The bottom of the well was simply earth. The first three feet of this soil were mainly blackish, later becoming more clayey.

3. The Arch

Just visible from above, the presence of an arch as an integral part of the well construction is a unique feature among Keynsham wells, and of other wells elsewhere too I suspect. The top of the arch is 80in down from the mouth of the well. Its overall width is 48in and its inside

measurement is 38in. The face of the arch stones is smooth and flat (not curved) and the heavy keystone, 10in wide at the top, tapers down to just 3in. All these stones, varying from 3in to 5in wide, are 13in deep and form an impressive powerful arch.

As the well's curving sides rose layer by layer, the two stones at the end of each storey were placed against the outside edges of the arch. When the height of the well reached the top of the arch, further layers were placed on top of the arch.

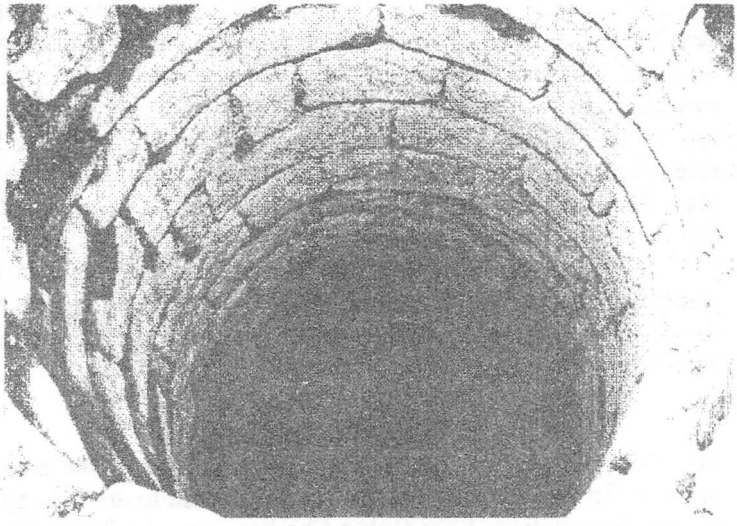

Fig.2. The interior of the well, showing the carefully shaped stones.

Behind the arch of dressed stone was a further semicircular arch, but this time consisting of crudely cut stones jammed in together, though they too have stood the test of time. But the passageway thus built only goes back 27in, where, after a space of 1-2in, it ends in a flattish vertical wall of earth which was whitish and covered in irregular rows of deposits of lime. This did not happen overnight: it was the accretion of many years. Dark soil has been deposited below the arch, making the uneven floor only some 40in below the arch.

A slab of pennant stone, 7in thick, and possibly from the local Durley Hill quarry, with a hole cut in the middle for the well-bucket, completed the construction. As only one side of it remains, the diameter

of the mouth of this pennant stone cannot now be measured.

Although parts of the pennant stone top have broken and fallen into the earth at the bottom, the sides of the well are still in remarkably good condition. On the SE side, part of the wall bulges in slightly, while on the SW side a small outward curve is just discernible. This is common to other local wells and is to be expected after all this time.

4. The Water Source

When uncovered the sides were still damp, but several stones soon began to dry. The wetness did not indicate the height of the water table, or even the presence of water. Basically the well was dry. Looking under the arch, I discovered that the roof stones were wet and dripping. This was where the water used to enter. The bottom of the well and the bottom of the archway, though now uneven, were originally one flat surface. The arch section was not an afterthought, but part of the original plan. The side section was so built because that was where water actually flowed in, and not from below or from the side of the well itself.

Why was the well not built over the water channel in the first place; was there a boundary wall preventing this, and the arch built under it? Or was the water diviner just a few feet out when he said, "dig here"?

5. Keynsham Gouts

Miss Mary Fairclough mentioned that the hillside of the park behind the High Street had many conduits or gouts, built to drain away the water that flowed down from Queen Charlton. One fed Pump Court well, then flowed on to the Abbey's fish-pond lower down. Mary is surely right when she commented that, 'the Abbey masons began it, and afterwards local stonemasons carried on building them as required'.

She remembers being called in by Mr Len Coggins to examine the old cottage that stood opposite the Ship Inn in Temple Street, just before it was bulldozed to build Tamsin Court. "It was a sixteenth century building with lovely wooden beams supporting its low ceilings, with stone mullion windows. Originally it had been quite an important house. Later it had been extended and two cottages built in the front garden. Delightful semicircular stone steps led down to the cellar, with its cobble floor. It had been empty for a long while and rubbish crowded the floor."

Mary described how, by the limited light that came from the stairway, she saw in the cellar, at the bottom of one of its walls, an arch

about 24in wide by 18in high, made of brick or a reddish stone. From below the arch a runnel flowed in a channel about 12in wide and 6in deep, across the floor and out through another arch the other side of the cellar, disappearing under Temple Street, some 10ft below road level. In earlier days the road level would have been some 4ft lower than it is today. Mary added that, "Keynsham rather specialised in gouts, though they were only put in where the stream was sufficiently respectable to need it. Even in the nineteenth century they built one taking water from the Workhouse to the bank in the field above the Chew, which was smashed up in the 1968 flood".

This links with an item in Parry (1993, 4): "The Temple Street evaluation (Erskine 1990) . . . uncovered stone-lined features forming part of a water disposal system of medieval or postmedieval date . . . " Parry's own excavations at the back of number 32, revealed "stones within the wall, which were set in red clay" (p.7). It was the red clay that further along the street caught Mary's eye years earlier.

It would seem probable that the arch in the Slipper Well was once connected to one of these many water channels. Later the channel was closed and hence the arch now has just an earth back.

Mary mentioned Joe Gerrish's well in Bristol Road, just above Cannock's, "that never ran dry". During a long dry summer some obviously did. It has been a wet summer and this well is dry. Why? Between the higher land of Queen Charlton and Temple Street lies the extensive Federated Homes Estate. Large efficient drains carry off the storm water, so that the underground streams are now depleted of water.

6. The House

The sinking of a well usually preceded the construction of the dwelling. When I discussed with Mary Fairclough the sheer quality of the Milward Lodge well, she commented that such workmanship reflected the financial status of the owner of the house who commissioned it. On the strength of that observation, the Temple Street house that was built here contemporary with the well, must also have been a fine quality building. Archaeological evidence suggests a medieval building, so the well could be at least five hundred years old, or more.

7. The End of the Well

One hopes to find at least early pottery to suggest the well's date, even though regular cleaning would have removed such evidence long ago.

The soil at the bottom of the well was sand-like in the ease with which it could be dug into. I was able to go down nearly 4ft below the bottom of the first layer of the well proper, that is, a foot below the bedrock. There was still more earth below to be excavated. Artefacts had worked their way down, with some probably far deeper than I went.

I found several parts of a white jug with an underglaze turquoise ivy leaf pattern on it, probably about 8in wide. More mundane objects turned up. Small lengths of twisted wire, heavily rusted tins, three small glass fish paste bottles (from Chappell Brothers?) and a taller one, a large part of a double Roman tile, and a small part of an earlier one, together with small pieces of thin flat glass and a thicker piece from a bottle. Golden coloured pieces of bone, with an accompanying jaw of an unidentified animal, caused speculation.

Almost at the deepest part excavated, were the remains of three leather shoes. Of one, a little more than the sole remained. Of the other two, one was a boot, with the lace holes still recognisable. 'Victorian' was the general comment. I thought the find at least justified the name 'Slipper Well' to distinguish it from other wells. Once the well was no longer needed it was used as a dustbin. An inglorious end to some beautiful architecture.

However, that is not quite the end of the matter. Later I rang Mrs Lily Harrison (née White) knowing that she was born in Temple Street, to ask if she had ever heard of an underground passage joining the wells. No, she had not; but she mentioned that number 32 had been her family home, and that she had enjoyed a really good laugh when she heard that the well was being excavated. It was working when her father bought the house, but he had it capped because of the danger to his family of small children. Thereafter they used it to dispose of their rubbish.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Mr Adrian Parry, MA, of the Avon Archaeological Unit, for permission to quote from his *Avon SMR 9500*.

Woad and Woadmen in Keynsham

Charles Browne

This paper is based on data collected by Connie Smith, former Archivist of Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society. She published an article on the Keynsham growers in the Keynsham Weekly Chronicle *in 1970. Thanks are also due to Joan Day and Mary Fairclough.*

The woad plant, *Isatis tinctoria*, produces a blue dye. Caesar noted its use as "warpaint" by the British warriors, to give themselves a more terrifying appearance in battle. Scholars have wondered if Caesar was mistaken, and that the blue pigment was a copper-based mineral, since woad seems not to be native to Britain. However, the remains of woad plants have recently been found at an Iron Age settlement near Scunthorpe, which gives more credibility to Caesar's report. It has had a long history of use in the dyeing industry. Woad was the principal source of blue dye until the early 1800s, when imported indigo and logwood became available. Its cultivation and processing in the Keynsham area have been recorded.

The woad plant

Woad is a member of the Cruciferae (Cabbage) family. Its generic name, *Isatis*, derives from the Greek υσαζω (*to make even*) because it was supposed to have the property of smoothing the skin. It is a tall, branched, mostly hairless, biennial or perennial, with basal rosettes of stalked, wavy-edged, lanceolate, downy leaves; the upper leaves are hairless, grey-green, arrow-shaped, and clasp the stem. The branched inflorescence bears many yellow flowers, 4mm across, flowering June-August. The pods are dark-brown, oblong, hanging. Its habitat is in dry places and among rocks. It is rare in Britain and Western Europe, being a native of Southern Europe and Asia. It is thought to have been an introduction to Britain, as a cultivated plant for producing a blue dye. Woad has been found in several localities, as an "escape", but is scarcely fully naturalised, except possibly near Tewkesbury, where it

appears to be indigenous.

J. W. White (1881) quotes Mr T. H. Flower in Swete's *Fl. Brist.*, "Formerly cultivated about Keynsham, Somerset, where I have occasionally found it". This is the last record of its occurrence in the area.

Woad in the Dyeing Industry

The production of woad comprised two operations: cultivation of the raw material, and its processing into a product that could be sold to the dyers. Usually both operations were carried out in the same place and by the same people, but woad was also grown as a cash crop by farmers seeking to diversify their market.

It was a basic dye for woollen, flax and hemp cloth, so it was always much sought after and commanded a high price. At the end of the 16th century, when cloth manufacturers needed large quantities of woad, the industry was strictly regulated. A register of licensed growers was kept.

Hurry (1930, p.67) wrote: "Woad was one of the chief agricultural products of Somerset, and to it the county owed the excellence of its 'azures' and 'plunketts'. Keynsham, near Bath, Wells and Glastonbury were important centres." [Plunket is a pale shade of blue.]

Besides the local product, much was imported, and the *Little Red Book of Bristol* contains many Ordinances regulating its sale to dyers.

Cultivation

Collinson (1791, 2, p.400) tells us that woadmen were itinerant, as the woad plant took so much out of the ground that it was advisable to move on after a year or two. This matter of soil exhaustion troubled many people, and clauses were inserted in old leases forbidding cultivation of woad. This fear is not supported by what we know of the plant's natural preference for dry marginal land. Mr Bartley, an enterprising farmer at Brislington, a man of scientific mind, was sceptical of the Keynsham growers' claims for the particular properties of their soil. He wrote in *Letters and Correspondence of Bath & West Society*, vol.1, 1802, p.184:

> "On having been in conversation with some growers of woad who reside at Keynsham, a place famous for the manufacture of this valuable dye stuff, it was asserted by them that the growth of woad was peculiar to their soil and situation; being a blackish heavy mould with a good proportion of clay, but working freely.
>
> I sowed half an acre on the common at Brislington on ex-

ceedingly fine tilth and a better crop I never saw at Keynsham.

I could not prevail on any of the Keynsham growers to purchase it, although but about two miles distant; and not having either apparatus or judgment to manufacture I suffered it to run to seed, gaining knowledge from the experiment that it is a very easy culture and might be made general, and that the only difficulty is in preparing it for market.

The growers treated the plant as a biennial, and planted in the Spring to produce by the end of June or early July plants large enough for the first crop of leaves to be taken off. Three crops of leaves could be taken from each plant, the last in late Autumn, after which the plants were left until the next year to produce seed for further sowing. Hoeing and weeding, the latter done with a *woad spud*, kept many people at work, many being women and children. At the end of the 16th century it is said that 40 acres planted with woad would keep a hundred and forty persons constantly at work."

Billingsley (1797, p.113) recognised the cultivation of woad as important, as it related to the extensive woollen manufacture in the county. He wrote:

"It is raised principally in the neighbourhood of Keynsham, and its quality is much esteemed.

The farmers who raise it have an opinion that the parish of Keynsham is particularly favourable to the growth and perfection of it; but this is most likely a vulgar error, for experiments are attested of as good crops elsewhere. The soil should be strong and good where it flourishes; it delights most in a deep fat loam, of a dark colour, which must have so much land as to admit of easy pulverization. As the excellence of woad consists in its size, and the succulency of its leaf, it requires careful management as well as a rich soil. It is most commonly grown on land fresh broken up, and on narrow ridges.

The first ploughing should be against winter; the second in the Spring, when the ridges should be formed; a third in April; and the last in May or June, just before sowing of the seed. In the intervals of the ploughing, harrowing should take place, to destroy the weeds.

The seed is sometimes sown by the best farmers in drills, for which purpose the surface should be harrowed very fine and level. The Plants in a moist season appear in a fortnight and in two or

three weeks after are fit to hoe; they should be hoed out clean, to the distance of about six inches at least, some prefer a greater distance.

In this neighbourhood, hand-weeding and thinning are generally used; and at the employ, women and children earn very high wages, especially since a cotton manufacture has been introduced in the parish. [The Cotton Mill was established in 1788 (Latimer, p.482), so woad-growing was carried on at least until the last years of the 1700s.]

The success of the crop depends much on hoeing and weeding, so as to keep the ground fresh and clean. Thus managed, three or four gatherings will be produced in succession; but the first two are the best.

The leaves are cut by hand, and gathered into baskets by women and children, who carry them to a very deep large cart at the edge of the field".

Manufacture

Billingsley (*ibid.*) describes the manufacturing process:

"When the crops are carted home, the plant is thrown into a mill, constructed with a heavy iron ribbed roller, something like that which is used for bruising bark and other substances; by this process it is cut and bruised to a pulp. It is then laid in small heaps, pressed close and smooth and a crust formed on the outside cracks, it is closed to preserve the strength of the substance. After lying about for a fortnight in this state, the heaps are broken up, the outside worked into a mass, and the whole formed by the hand, and sometimes by wooden moulds, into oval balls, which are then dried on hurdles under a shed exposed to the sun.

They turn black, or of a dark brown, on the outside, and when well manufactured are valued in proportion to their specific weight and a purplish cast in the middle. Thus they are sold to the dyer. The quantity per acre near a ton and a half."

Hurry (1930) adds details about the manufacturing process:

"Leaves were brought to the woad mill in large baskets or skeps where they were pulped by the use of a horse gin. The animal pulled a massive crushing wheel or roller round and round a narrow pit. The pulp was then hand-kneaded into balls or wads. (The workmen's hands became stained almost black.) The balls were then put out to dry for one to four weeks after which they were

pulverized in the roller house again. The drying ranges were well-ventilated wooden erections supporting a series of gratings and arranged in tiers one above the other. The third operation consisted of fermenting the pulverized dry matter in the couching house. This building was probably attached to the woad mill or roller mill and contained a large paved area where the dry matter could be sprinkled with water and converted into a paste. This process of fermentation took about nine weeks, the mixture being turned about and sprinkled from time to time. The whole process let off a disgusting stench particularly at the beginning of the operation when the matter was hot and steaming. By the time the fermentation was completed the woad had become a dark clay-like substance which when thoroughly dried was ready for dispatching to the dyer. Nine parts by weight of woad leaves were estimated to yield one part of woad dye.

The woadman, after exhausting his plot of land, would usually move to a new site where he could break fallow land, taking his roller and paving stones belonging to the mill. The woad mill was a circular construction with turf walls about four feet high and roofed with timber which was then thatched, and the couching mill was probably a wing added."

Woad Production in the Keynsham area

The Dye Industry had been established in this area for many centuries, associated with the local woollen industry. Collinson quotes from *Somerset Wills*:

> "1481 Simon Lacey bequeaths his woadvat, John Attwater making a similar bequest in 1500 with the addition of a furnace. Agnes Petygrewe of Publow, who owned a dyeing house left the same together with le fatte and furneyse . . . whilst to the church of St Thomas at Pensford and to one at Publow the testatrix gave one measure of woad."

The first mention of it in Keynsham is in 1746 when William Saunders, the woadman, was buried in the outer aisle of the Parish Church.

Chilcott's New Guide to Bristol (1826, p.223) states that woad was cultivated in Keynsham.

White (1912, p.165) was told by C. Withers of Saltford that he had often heard his father say that the plant was grown, and the dye-stuff made from it, at the Woad Range. The "Woad Range" was a field name derived from the block of buildings (then still standing) in which

the woad was prepared for market.

Joan Day notes that circles of paved stones, locally known as the remains of horse-gins, are still in existence at Woollard and Queen Charlton. Barbara Lowe has air photographs of crop marks showing similar features at Chewton Keynsham. Are these the remains of mills used for crushing woad?

Mary Fairclough relates that her cousin Keith Thomas recalled that there was a Keynsham woad mill in The Park at Spring Cottage (near Bath Hill Bridge on the Colour Mill side).

Today we see in all countries the decline of traditional industries, and consequent economic and social turmoil. Naturalists and Conservationists are concerned about the loss of species in the wake of development. In the early 1800s Keynsham witnessed both these phenomena, when new products replaced the traditional woad dye, and the woad plant became virtually extinct in Britain.

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When I was Six

Violet Ellis

Shortly before her death at the age of 90 in April 1993, Miss Violet Ellis, of Albert Road, Keynsham, was interviewed by Margaret Whitehead. She was a sister of the late Mr Len Ellis.

We came to live in Keynsham when I was six years old. We lived next door to my grandmother in one of the three cottages on the north side of Bath Hill East[1]

I can remember a very large old bread oven in which three of us could hide, and grandmother would get very puzzled as to where we had vanished. There were large stone flags, worn smooth, on the floor and a shining solid copper for boiling the washing.

I attended a small private school in a three-storied narrow house on Bath Hill West[2]. It was run by the Misses Boston, costing 6d (2½p) a week. This was almost opposite to Bath Hill School where I moved to at the age of seven. The headmaster was "Gaffer" Wheeler, and the classroom was a large room known as the "long room". It had a spyhole in the door at one end, used by the teachers to see if we misbehaved. Miss Edith Parker was the teacher, and it was a good education with excellent discipline, the three "Rs" being paramount. We never left the classroom without permission, and had to mind our manners. There were no outings of any kind. Friday afternoons we did P.E., but did not do games.

I left school at 14, after a short period of pupil-teaching, to look after my mother. Even if I had obtained a scholarship my father could still not afford further education. He died aged 42, having been bed-ridden for a year. My mother died at 43 from T.B.

I lived in Park Road and St George's Road with my two sisters and brother for a time. Then with my sisters we became caretakers at the Station Road surgery for 8½ years, living in the flat on the first floor. I had a part-time job in Bristol, and was Deputy Registrar to Mr Clifford Dowling in Keynsham, and acted as Registrar during the Second World War. I had to go into Bath three times a week.

We were brought up as an Anglican family and attended St John's Parish Church. We were made to feel outsiders there. When my sister Pat joined Victoria Methodist Church choir to sing *Messiah* she found

it friendlier and decided to change her allegiance. The result was that the whole family moved "over the road" and were all committed Methodists for the rest of our lives.

Recreation was mainly walks and picnics. The annual Sunday School outing to Weston-super-Mare was the highlight of our year. I remember as children we used sometimes to tie door knockers together for fun, and then run away. We were all frightened to death of the village policeman—a real country bobby. He used to swipe your back with his cloak, and we would run when anyone said "here's old Bobby Millard coming".

You could buy anything in the shops here in those days, and there was always a chair where you could sit in comfort while being attended. We couldn't afford to go away for our annual fortnight's holiday, but there were lots of trains and buses for days out.

The Workhouse[3] was very "dickensian". The women worked in the laundry and wore striped dresses. The men worked in the garden. For the really poor there was nowhere else. Unmarried mothers had to have their babies there, and were encouraged to have them adopted.

During the war women helped with tarring the roads and worked in the munitions factory on Bath Road. We had to queue up for our rations.

I think the main difference with life today was that women mostly stayed at home, and there was no rushing about. Keynsham was much friendlier when a village.

Notes

[1] The three cottages, now two dwellings, were saved from demolition by the efforts of Miss Mary Fairclough and the Civic Society in 1974. They are now beautifully maintained Grade II listed buildings.

[2] This house was one of a terrace fronting onto Bath Hill, now the site of Keynsham Town Hall. See B. J. Lowe & T. Brown, *Around Keynsham & Saltford in Old Photographs*, Alan Sutton, 1988.

[3] The Keynsham Union Workhouse, now Keynsham Hospital, was erected in 1837. As a result of the 1946 National Health Services Act it became Crown property, and in 1950 new legislation designated it as a hospital only dealing with sick people.

Keynsham Cemetery: an Unwelcome Resurrection

Charles Browne

In the previous issue Margaret Whitehead related the turbulent events that led to the choice of site for a new cemetery. She concluded: "As a result of the above furore, Keynsham Cemetery was eventually sited in the middle of a very large Roman Villa . . . But that is another story." This is that other story.

The decision by the Vestry Meeting to buy two and a half acres of Mr Comer's land on Durley Hill was made on 23rd February 1877. Sanction to borrow the necessary money was given on the 18th May 1877. As soon as work began on the foundations of the mortuary chapel the builders encountered the remains of a Roman building[1].

Writing long afterwards Bulleid & Horne (1926, 109) "regretted that when it was first discovered that the foundations of a Roman house of great size were within the area of the new purchase, no steps were taken to preserve it. That these remains were known to exist in 1877 there is clear evidence".

Colonel J. R. Bramble, FSA, wrote to John E. Pritchard, the well-known Bristol antiquary, on 28th December 1899, saying that he made notes when the foundations of the chapel were being dug, in 1877. "On the other side I send you a copy of my rough sketch made at the time. The "test-hole" which had been put in to try the suitability of the ground for the purpose of interments, was 7ft deep. At that depth was a pavement of flat stones. The foundations were excavated 4ft 6in in depth, when they came upon a pavement of white lias tesserae—no pattern or ornament visible. . . . At one corner, as you will see by the sketch-plan, a portion of a curved foundation was disclosed. . . . I learnt from a workman that in the lower wall of the cemetery they had crossed another foundation."

Despite of this evidence of potential problems ahead, burials began at once in the lower (eastern) half of the cemetery. They continued for over forty years until most of two magnificent corridors, with their adjacent rooms containing fine tessellated floors, were destroyed.

One fortunate circumstance prevented the destruction from extending to the whole of the site. When the land was bought in 1877 the owner of adjoining property on the western side managed to get an em-

bargo or restriction placed on the use of the upper part for burials. This restriction lasted until 1908, when Keynsham Parish Council paid a sum of money for it to be removed. It was not until twelve years later that this part of the site began to be used for interments.

In June 1921 Dom Ethelbert Horne of Downside, a respected Somerset historian and archaeologist, heard by accident of the difficulty the grave diggers were having in Keynsham. They complained of the hard work because of old floors that had to be "bumped through" and of walls that had to be pulled out. He visited the cemetery and watched the sexton, who was making a grave, destroy the ends of a flight of steps that came in his way.

What could be done? There were too many burials for an ordinary excavation to expose and preserve what remained of the building. However, help was at hand, by chance, from an unexpected quarter. In 1921 J. S. Fry & Sons bought land on the Hams in Keynsham to build a factory to replace their cramped site in the centre of Bristol. When preparing the foundations, two Roman stone coffins were discovered. They contained a male and a female skeleton, and that containing the male was lined with lead. This was the burial of important and wealthy persons. St George Gray, the leading archaeologist in Somerset, who had learned his craft from General Pitt-Rivers, was called in to excavate the burials.

The coffins were on view for some time and aroused great local interest. It is thought that this find was a major factor in influencing Keynsham Parish Council to allow excavations to be made in the cemetery. (A cynic might add that this was a chance for the Council, at no expense to itself, to solve the difficulties of a situation that it ought to have tackled in 1877.) The Clerk to the Council, Mr C. H. Abbott, was a keen local historian. His interest in the local antiquities ensured that the Councillors were led along the paths of righteousness, and any difficulties arising from the delicate circumstance of an excavation close to graves were smoothed over.

Soon after the discovery of the coffins, further work on the foundations of Fry's new factory uncovered a Roman building. It was much smaller than the villa in the cemetery, but it was equipped with a bath suite appropriate to the civilised Roman way of life. Clearly there would be advantages in combining excavation of this site with the larger operation at the cemetery. The directors of Fry's gave enthusiastic support to this arrangement, which ensured the success of the whole project. In the end, it turned out that Fry's was the major source of

funds. It is doubtful if Keynsham alone would have raised enough to complete the excavation at the cemetery, and certainly not enough to lift and conserve the fine mosaic panels. This work alone was said to have cost £600 (a lot of money in 1924) and was paid for entirely by Fry's. It should be remembered that these items were (and remain) the property of the Local Authority. This shows a degree of public responsibility rare today, but to be expected of the Quaker traditions of service of the Fry and Cadbury families.

E. W. Hilton, architect of the Fry's factory buildings, another enthusiastic local historian, influenced the decisions of the directors. He obtained from Fry's all the plant and equipment needed for the excavations free of cost. His fine designs at Somerdale have been obscured by later constructions and alterations, but the office block at Somerfields House is a splendid example of the *art deco* style and sadly unknown and unrecognised, even in Keynsham. After the parish church it is the most distinguished building in Keynsham.

An Excavation Committee was set up to raise funds and manage the work. It comprised Mr John E. Pritchard, FSA, Chairman, Dr A. Bulleid, FSA, and the Rev. Father E. Horne, FSA, Hon. Secretaries and Directors of the work. Mr G. E. Chappell, Chairman of the Parish Council, was Treasurer of the Excavation Fund. The other members of the committee were C. H. Abbott (Clerk to the Parish Council), G. Lawrence Bulleid, H. St George Gray, Gerald J. Grey, E. W. Hilton (architect of Fry's factory), and Hugh H. Massey. Bulleid and Horne were joint directors, but each had his own special field of responsibility. Bulleid was the surveyor who made all the measurements and plans, while Horne was the photographer and fund-raiser.

Work in the first season began on 11th September 1922 and ended on 9th October. The following year they worked from 11th June until 7th July. The last season in 1924 lasted for only a fortnight, from 19th July.

And that was the end of Keynsham Roman Villa. In the conclusion to their report published by the Society of Antiquaries in *Archaeologia* Bulleid and Horne stated: "It is a matter for regret that this Roman house could not be preserved *in situ*, after it had been excavated, but it was obviously impossible in the circumstances. Its position in a public cemetery where the ground was badly needed for interments made its destruction inevitable, and all that could be done was to uncover what remained, and make as complete a record of it as possible before the burials encroached on it any further. All the tessellated floors

that were sufficiently intact to be worth preserving have been carefully taken up, and the wall-foundations have been removed by the cemetery authorities to make the ground more fit for its purpose."

The regret is felt perhaps even more keenly today. Archaeologists now recognise that Keynsham Villa was not just one of your average villas, but in size and quality of its architecture and mosaic floors can better be described as a "palace". It seems fitting that the estate attached to the villa eventually descended to ownership by Edith, last Anglo-Saxon Queen of England.

But it is, in fact, not quite the end of Keynsham Roman Villa. In the 1840s the road from Keynsham to Bristol was realigned at Durley Hill. The Old Bristol Road took (and still takes) a circular loop avoiding wetter low-lying ground and skirting the site of the villa. No doubt in Anglo-Saxon times the ruins of the villa still made an obstacle to be avoided. The new road takes a straight line and is built on a high embankment. The material for the embankment was taken from the cutting driven through the hill in the direction of Bristol. This embankment covers the centre of the villa and all the south corridor. Because the new road was built up and not cut down into the old land surface, the part of the villa under the embankment is preserved intact. This includes the centre of the west corridor where, by analogy with other palatial villas, we would expect to find the most sumptuous reception rooms of the establishment. Unfortunately, we are not likely to be able to close the Bristol road and carry out a highly productive excavation in the near future. But it will come one day. In Switzerland an archaeological rescue involving rerouting of several roads has been tackled with great success. That, as Margaret Whitehead would say, is yet another story.

Lady Bracknell, in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, remarked that "To lose one parent may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness". Keynsham seems to have been careless with its antiquities. Here we have seen a palatial Roman villa destroyed to make way for a cemetery which might well have been sited elsewhere. Another smaller building (as we now know, part of an extensive settlement named in the Antonine Itinerary) was covered by a factory. Keynsham Abbey was demolished at the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the sixteenth century, but its final remains were swept away by a bypass in the 1960s. In the 1980s British Gas drove a pipeline through an unknown Roman villa east of Keynsham, using high explosives. In the 1990s the levelling of a rugby pitch destroyed part of the Roman

settlement at Somerdale, but at least produced conclusive evidence that the settlement existed. Except for the Abbey, all these losses were on greenfield sites. It almost looks as if Keynsham did not deserve to have any antiquities if it could not care for them better than this.

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Notes

[1] Part of a mosaic floor survives *in situ* under the mortuary chapel wooden floor. It would be a valuable exercise one day to lift the floor and record this mosaic.

Addendum

Just before sending this issue to the printer local newspapers report that Wansdyke District Council is concerned at the state of the cemetery. The wall bordering the main road has been damaged by a vehicle, and the fabric of the Chapel has deteriorated to such an extent that it may need extensive underpinning of the foundations or even complete demolition.Any such work should be supervised to record any further archaeological material exposed. If the chapel is demolished the mosaic which still exists below it should be lifted and conserved.

Local Archaeological Work

Barbara J. Lowe

Keynsham Abbey

The Abbey's three famous sculptured keystones were collected from Keynsham Town Hall on Tuesday 11th January, to begin their journey to a Romanesque Exhibition at the Palazzo Valencia in Rome. The exhibition runs until 30th April.

We hope that work will begin soon to enhance the Abbey site in Memorial Park. Improvements will include removal of the spoil heap, erection of new fence, hut and signs. A geophysical survey is to be carried out by English Heritage, and archaeologists from the Folk House Archaeological Society's team (which has been solely responsible for rescuing and preserving the remains of Keynsham Abbey over the past 32 years) will carry out further small excavations to verify the geophysical survey. The results will be added to information already discovered by FHAS and a further report will be published.

Cadbury's

Members of the same archaeological team continue to spend their spare time rescuing artefacts from the extensive spoil heap which overlay the Roman settlement revealed by rugby pitch levelling almost two years ago.

Last year Cadbury's sought planning permission to erect a new sports pavilion west of the above site, so Avon Planning Department employed their Avon Archaeological Unit to carry out an evaluation of the pavilion site. Several trenches were cut with machinery and various Roman features and artefacts were discovered.

Temple Street

In response to a planning application by John Paget for properties in Temple Street, several archaeological evaluations were carried out by the Avon Archaeological Unit. At the rear of No.32, in addition to post-medieval finds, the foundations of parts of two medieval stone revetment walls, bonded to form a T-shape were revealed. There were sealed occupation layers below and some fourteenth century pot sherds were recovered. In another part of the site, a well was discovered (see

report by Michael Fitter in this issue).

Back Lane

When the First Development here was due to begin in August 1988, Wansdyke District Council allowed local volunteers and archaeologists from FHAS exactly 28 days to carry out an archaeological evaluation by hand. We were anxious to discover whether there were any remains of the curtain wall of the Abbey precinct or ancillary buildings. Three areas were investigated, (1) at the north end of Back Lane adjacent to the Old Coach House, (2) mid-way along, (3) near the "kink" where the lane changed direction. Sites 2 and 3 were covered by a mass of tree stumps, bushes and roots, so proved exceedingly difficult to excavate by hand. Site 3 yielded a sherd of fourteenth century pot and a robbed portion of medieval walling. As time was limited, we concentrated on Site 1. Once we had removed thick nettles and roots, tin cans and broken glass, the underlying soil was black, beautifully fine and easy to excavate, although it stained our hands and clothes. There was evidence of industrial activity over a very long period—grey ash, soot, clinker and potsherds ranging from mid-sixteenth century to mid-nineteenth century. As is always the case, on the last day of permitted excavation, the foundations of two buildings were exposed. From documentary evidence in Deeds kindly made available by Lloyd's Bank, we learned that part of Blacksmith James Godfrey's house, stable, smithy, penthouse and garden occupied our site in 1777 and that in 1857 two ruinous cottages here were demolished. Hence our pottery sherds were a good indication that the cottages dated from the sixteenth century.

Although no construction took place, Back Lane was obliterated and a new road put in. The Coach House was demolished and the diverted public footpath now runs through the site.

Since 1988 several false alarms about imminent construction work on this site have prompted machine-trenched evaluations by the Avon Archaeological Unit. One of these, some 45ft due east of the cottage foundations, produced a portion of rough fifteenth century walling, running approximately N-S. Other trenches showed a large rubbish build-up over lias. Another evaluation took place on the site of the nineteenth century Liberal Club (later Old Library) and the western edge of the Old Court House on Bath Hill West. This revealed an extensive late nineteenth century/early twentieth century drainage system, the foundations of the Liberal Club and an interesting post-medieval cobbled way. The latter ran N-S but had been partially destroyed by

later buildings and drains. I think that it was formerly part of John Emery's premises. He was a maltster who began daily carriage of goods from Bristol to Bath on 12th June 1769. The Avon team thought the Courthouse was built in the eighteenth century on a site previously cleared. Some portions of fifteenth century walling and fourteenth century potsherds were located on part of the site.

We still await construction on the Back Lane site.

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