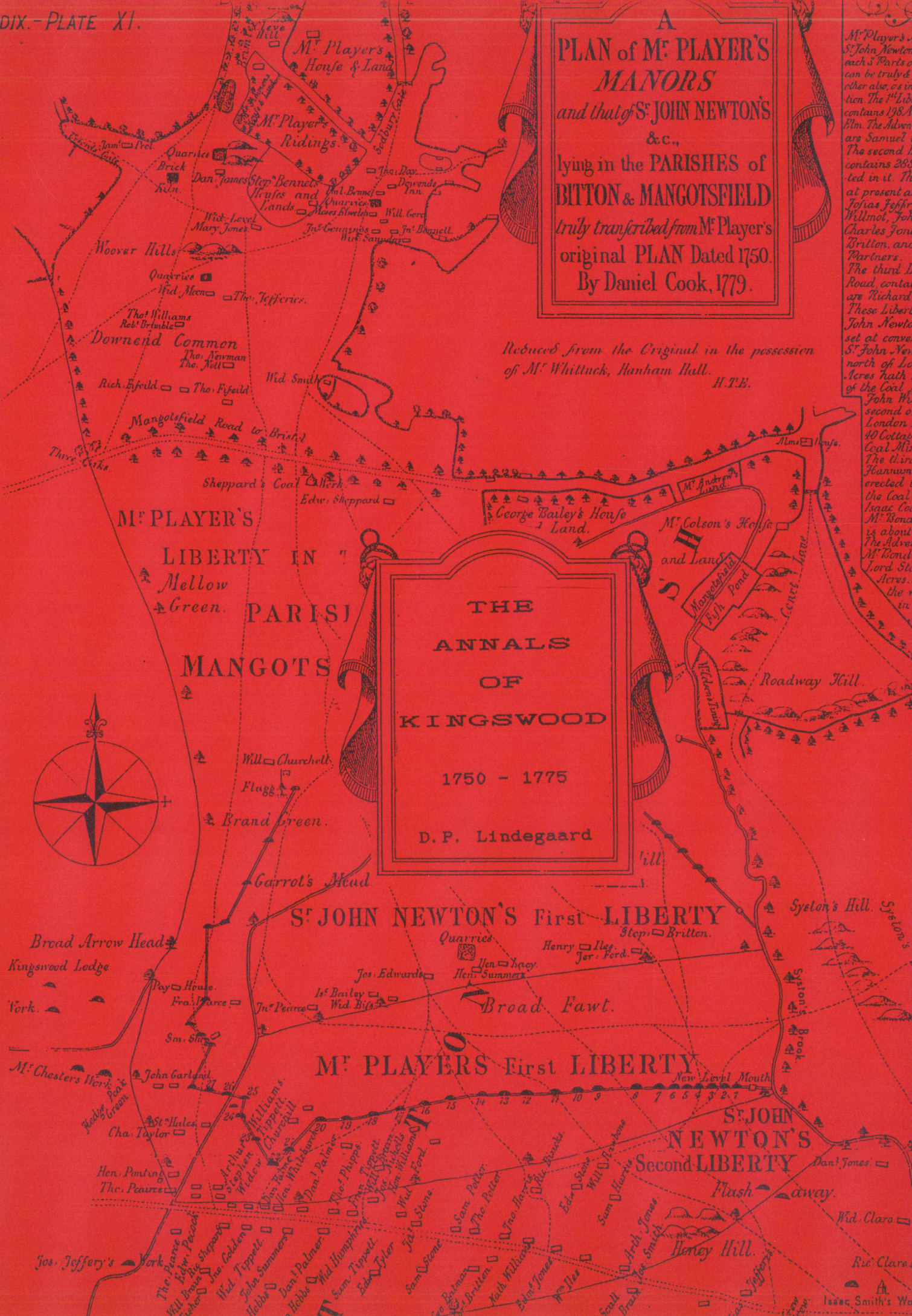


A
**PLAN of M^r PLAYER'S
 MANORS**
 and that of S^t JOHN NEWTON'S
 &c.,
 lying in the PARISHES of
BITTON & MANGOTSFIELD
 truly transcribed from M^r Player's
 original PLAN Dated 1750.
 By Daniel Cook, 1779.

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 of M^r Whittuck, Hanham Hall.
 H.T.E.



THE
 ANNALS
 OF
 KINGSWOOD
 1750 - 1775
 D. P. Lindegaard



Contact:

D.P. Lindegaard B.A
49 Clayfield Rd
Brislington
Bristol, BS4 4NH

email:

dplindegaard@bristolfamilyhistory.co.uk

or my website:

www.bristolfamilyhistory.co.uk

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THE
ANNALS
OF
KINGSWOOD

1750 - 1775

D. P. Lindegaard

Here a rude cottage stands in mouldring mud
The bleak wind whistles through its gaping sides
The children feed upon the floor, naked and starving
Or with bread and water fed while poor parents
lab'ring in the mines
Are digging night and day to starve along!
BEHOLD A PLACE DREADFUL TO THE TRAVELLER BENIGHTED!

(Kingswood; A Fragment, 1767)

DEDICATION

To the

POOR HACKS

The Bristol newspaper reporters of the eighteenth century
none of whom was ever given a byline.

THANK YOU

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The Parish Church of St Mary's, Bitton.

A
**PLAN of M^r PLAYER'S
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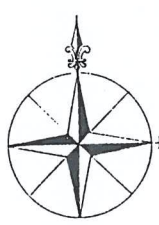
Explanation

M^r Player's Manor of Milton and that of S^t John Newton's adjoining unto it do so divide each 3 Parts or Liberties that neither of them can be truly & properly represented without the other also as in the Plan may be seen by Inspection. The 1st Liberty lying north of London Road contains 198 Acres, hath 10 Cottages, 13 Cakes 1 Elm. The Adventurers of the Coal Mines at present are Samuel Stone and Partners. The second Liberty crossing London Road contains 288 Acres, hath 25 Cottages erected in it. The Adventurers of the Coal Mines at present are Isaac Smith, James Stone, Thomas Jefferys, William Peacock, John Willmet, John Brain, Stephen Whitten, Charles Jones, Charles Brain, Francis Whitten, and Arthur Williams with their Partners. The third Liberty lying South of London Road contains 41 Acres. The Adventurers are Richard Bayley and Partners. These Liberties are divided from S^t John Newton's by certain Measurments set at convenient distances between them. S^t John Newton's first Liberty lying north of London Road contains 289 Acres hath 16 Cottages. The Adventurers of the Coal Mines lately was Tho^s Peacock, John Willis and Tho^s Punter. The second or Middle Liberty crossing London Road contains 197 Acres, hath 40 Cottages. The Adventurers of the Coal Mines are Sam. Potter & Partners. The third Liberty containing part of Stearnon is 215 Acres hath 70 Cottages erected therein. The Adventurers of the Coal Mines are Robert Coal, and Isaac Coal with their Partners. M^r Bond's Liberty called Cre Moor is about 70 Acres, hath 40 Cottages. The Adventurers of the Coal Mines are M^r Bond, M^r Baker & Company. Lord Stafford's Liberty is about 16 Acres. These Liberties together with the whole Chase of Kingswood lyeth in the County of Gloucester. Note that all such Marks as they stand between the Liberties are for Trees & are all set 4 feet from the line of M^r Player's Liberty, such as are an Arrow for Coal-Pits with the owner's James name. The small double lines thus — are for Levelling for draining the water off from the Coal Works. The double pricked lines are the greater Roads. The single pricked lines are the lesser Roads.

Part of the Liberty belonging to John Berkeley, Esq^r in the PARISH of STAPLETON.

Part of the Liberty belonging to Tho^s Chester, Esq^r in the PARISH of ST PHILIP & JACOB.

Part of SYSTON PARISH.



A SCALE of 320 PERCHES, or one MILE.

WITHOUT LAWFORD'S GATE

being the Annals of Kingswood Forest for the years 1750 - 1775.

I have chosen the years 1750 - 1775 deliberately and selfishly as the first in my series of the Annals of Kingswood because during these years my Pillinger ancestors came to live in the place.

Nathaniel and Sarah arrived in 1754 and died less than a year later, leaving a son and daughter. Betty aged nine, was parted from her brother and cruelly removed to the parish of Yatton Keynell whence they had come but John aged 15 was allowed to stay. In 1761 he married Catherine Lear at St Mary's Bitton. Their fifth child, my ancestor John, was born in 1772. Although I have other ancestors in the area in the female lines and can retreat further back with them within Kingswood, Pillinger was my own maiden name and I have a soft spot for it. We have been in Kingswood ever since though I no longer live there.

As a family historian, my job is to put flesh on the bones of my ancestors and therefore I decided to attempt to explore the times in which they lived, not through events of national importance which I believe would scarcely have disturbed the fabric of their lives but through the trivia of local happenings in their own community. Small news items and gossip which would have been on everybody's lips. Through these little events I believe I can catch glimpses of my people and their neighbours going about their daily business. There is very little fun in the narrative for only trouble is ever recorded but perhaps even with their dour existence, like us, they had their moments when they managed to smile through adversity.

To put the national scene in perspective: The kings were George's two and three.

Dr Johnson published his dictionary in 1755. (Unfortunately meaningless to most of our heroes and heroines, the vast majority of whom could neither read nor write.) The Seven Years War began in 1756 and affected our people by the arrival of the press-gang; the year was also famous for the Black Hole of Calcutta. They possibly heard of this remote barbarity and threatened their children with it for misbehaviour. Handel died in 1759 and Gainsborough had begun to paint society likenesses. Pictures of the poor are hard to find. Brindley designed the Worsley-Manchester canal and this form of transport revolutionised trade. Hargreaves invented the Spinning Jenny in 1764 and in 1769, Arkwright's water frame made an appearance. In the same year Watt took out the first patent on his steam engine. This last would certainly alter our people's lives for originally it was used for mining operations. Mechanisation too would draw immigrants from the surrounding country into this old industrial district, where coal had been dug since time immemorial. In 1775 Sheridan's *The Rivals* was produced but few probably heard of the drama. If plays were performed locally by strolling players, we do not hear of them. George Washington was still living quietly at his Mount Vernon Estate and fewer still had heard of him. Some of our people had probably emigrated across the Atlantic and others were transported to the plantations of Virginia as felons. Soon they would have to make a choice between the Old World and the New.

Lawford's Gate guarded the city of Bristol from its unruly eastern neighbour. It was demolished during the time period of these annals but its memory is preserved in the modern street name which is just beyond Old Market. I have been unable to trace any drawing of the Gate and it seems all that remained in the early nineteenth century was the rather impressive sculpture of a King which was part of the gate's statuary.

Beyond the gate lay Kingswood, the whole of the forest of the King's Wood, by now reduced to scrub and being raped by coalmining enterprises. Half a dozen "Lords" in the previous century had grabbed the land, seizing their opportunity when the Crown's lease on the chase ran out and during the upheaval of the civil wars. They chopped down the trees, killed the deer and divided the land into "Liberties" called after their own names; They sold fraudulent leases to mining adventurers, who in turn brought in a large workforce of miners and colliers, who threw up shanty dwellings. No amount of litigation was able to remove any of them and by the time of our period, the Lords like Newton, Player & Berkeley had become respectable, sitting as magistrates and MPs. A reputation for lawlessness which commenced with the initial land grab, led to vilification being heaped on the heads of the colliers themselves, mainly through the political protests of the first half of the eighteenth century. Kingswood was nationally notorious. At last, the missionary Whitfield, told there were "Indians" on his own doorstep, came to save the colliers' souls. Travelling in his wake, came the Wesleys, who convinced them that God loved them even if the Government did not. The dust had begun to settle on the "great stir" of the religious upheaval in Kingswood which happened just over a decade before we begin.....



All that remained of Lawford's Gate in the early 20th cen
a statue from the Gate drawn by Samuel Loxton

1750

A map of Kingswood was drawn up in this year. "A plan of Mr Player's Manors and that of Sir John Newton's &c lying in the parishes of Bitton and Mangotsfield." Many individual coalminers are named. John Wesley's boarding school for the children of his followers "our principle friends" and those of his itinerant preachers had been in operation eighteen months. These "privileged" boys (and a few girls) bore a rigid and terrible regime which filled every waking second from 4 a.m. to exhausted bedtime at 8 p.m., seven days a week, with no holidays. In the certain belief that the devil makes work for idle hands, Wesley himself devised this tyranny to keep the scholars from "idleness and effeminacy". "He that plays when he is a child will play when he is a man," the great man sternly admonished. Charles Wesley, not to be outdone, composed a song about it:

Let heathenish boys
In their pastimes rejoice
And be foolishly happy at play:
Overstocked if they are,
We have nothing to spare,
Not a moment to trifle away.

2nd February

Abraham Long was paid 20 shillings (= £1) for conveying James Cary to Gloucester Gaol. (BPO)

24th February

"Monday, died at his house, The Lodge, Kingswood, of a gentle decay of nature, aged 75, Mr Charles Arthurs, senior, Superintendent of the Coal-works belonging to Norborne Berkeley, Member of Parliament for the County of Gloucester. He was justly esteemed an excellent Judge in the nature of coalmines and carried with him to his grave the Character of one of the most faithful, indefatigable Stewards that ever served an honourable Family. In his private Station of Life he was an Example of Sobriety, Frugality and good Economy by which commendable Qualifications he acquired a handsome Fortune, the bulk whereof he has left to his son, Mr Charles Arthurs who succeeds him as Superintendent over all the works." (S.Farley's BJ)

28th April

"Thursday afternoon, the noted Thomas Summers of Kingswood who has had several warrants against him was taken in a Public House in Temple Street by an officer and two men belonging to the City. As they were conveying him along Thomas Street, some countrymen surrounded him and a smart skirmish ensued. Summers took the opportunity of running away, crossed the river at Temple Backs and marched off in triumph." (ibid)

(Summers was almost certainly the same man who had taken part in a famous pit rescue, along with Moses Reynolds, Thomas Smith and Sampson Phipps, 15 years before when three men and a boy lay entombed in a Two Mile Hill coalmine for ten days and nights. He was on this occasion probably wanted in connection with the Turnpike riots of 1749. The Summers family, like the Phipps's were politically active as is witnessed by the uprising of 1753 as we shall see.)

11th June

Robert Leonard of Hanham was the landlord of a pub at Oldland. A certain James Davis refused to pay for his ale saying he had no money. In the row that followed Robert and his wife searched Davis and found on him a vast sum: 36 shilling pieces, 7 moidores, 6 half-guineas and £60 in silver. Mrs Leonard put the money upstairs for safe keeping. Davis declared they had robbed him and on the Leonards' insistence, they saw a Justice of the Peace. The result was the reverse of their expectations, for the J.P. committed them (along with Thomas Richards who was also in the pub) to the Bridewell at Lawford's Gate. There they remained until the Assizes when at last justice triumphed. "Not a true bill" said the Judge. (BO, 14.6. & 4.8.1750)

(And I should think so, indeed!)

10th September.

Mrs Field's maid of Stapleton was attacked near the Turnpike by two men in sailor's habits, one armed with a pistol, the other with a stick and robbed of five shillings and a silver thimble. (ibid)

31st December

William Tyler of Oldland, coalminer, was charged with being the father of Susanna Martin's bastard child. He was taken to the House of Correction at Lawford's Gate where he was kept six days until he gave "security to the Officers". (QS, GRO, G.6)

1751

18th February

Mrs Forth of Frampton Cotterell was stopped at Three Mile Elm, Frenchay by a footpad who threatened her with a large knife and robbed her of 8 shillings, four ha'pence and two gold rings which he took off her fingers. (BaJ)

1st June

His Majesty, King George II went to the House of Peers and gave his Royal Assent for the division of the parish of St Philip and St Jacob and erecting a new church. This church, named for England's patron saint, would eventually give its name to a Bristol suburb, although for many years it would be known as "The New Church, Kingswood".

10th August

William Gibbons, aged nine, was bitten by a rabid dog outside Lawford's Gate. "This morning he died raving mad." (BWI)

25th November

"Last Saturday sennight a ragged beggar came to a public house at Pucklechurch to ask charity of some countrymen who were drinking at the said house. They told him in a joking manner that they hanged all beggars and would hang him. He told them he was not fit to die but they taking hold of him got a rope, put it about his neck and drew him up to a bacon rack and bid him cry "Bacon". They hung him so long he seemed without life, his tongue extended from his mouth, so they let him fall again. Perceiving they had carried out their foolery too far and being

frightened at what might ensue, they carried the Beggar to a neighbouring field and laid him under a Hay Rick for dead. He, recovering his senses and making mournful groans, a woman heard him and the poor man gave her an intimation by signs how he came in that condition and pointed to the House where he had received the Injury. He has since died." (BaJ)

(But it was all a mistake - or was it? Later the Journal's reporter said he had made further enquiries and found it was a false story "which took its rise from one John Lawrence who had been loitering about as a vagabond and was supported by neighbours until he was at last found under a hay-mow." The beggar was dead - and it seems to me, the village closed ranks.)

1752

11th February

A young girl from Wick, 19 years old Ann Pillinger, ran away from home to lose herself in the sprawling outparish of St Philip & St Jacob. She was "in trouble" and her lover had run off. In due course she came to the notice of the parish overseers and she was obliged to give the name of the father of her expected child to them. On this day, Thomas Haynes, esquire, Lord of the Manor of Wick and Abson, "whose character as an upright magistrate will remain a shining example to future ages" (burial eulogy, 1776), rode into Bristol with a prisoner. To the House of Correction he committed "Richard Rew, charged on the oath of Ann Pillinger with having begotten her with child which child when born is a bastard and likely to become chargeable to the parish." It clearly would not do. Richard Rew was told to marry the girl or else and he was kept in prison until they brought him to church, manacled, for his wedding on the 24th February. (GRO QS; PRSPJ)

(It's a ill wind which blows nobody any good as the saying goes. Ann's trouble which took her away from Wick saved her life. She was spared the smallpox which swept through her family and killed eight out of her nine brothers and sisters. Thomas Pillinger, the father of this family was first cousin to my ancestor, Nathaniel Pillinger.) (PRWA)

3rd March

The foundation stone of the "New Church, Kingswood" was laid and dedicated to St George.

April

Walter Sellon, one of the boarders at the Wesleyan School drowned in the Rain water "Siston". (PRStPJ, quoted KWI)

May

Samuel Tippet, on behalf of Jarrit Smith, Steward of the Manor of Bitton, gave notice to Abell Isles to fill up a coalpit he had illegally dug at Cadbury Heath. (PB.X/5.BRO)

(It is not surprising that occasionally even today, Kingswood inhabitants can open their doors to be confronted by a dark hole where a pit has lain undetected for centuries. Nefarious adventurers, like Mr

Isles did not dig, willy-nilly, trusting to luck, for careful research revealed "headings" where a seam met ground level and coal would await harvest by the beady-eyed. As late as 1947, when the winter was harsh and fuel in short supply, Jack Pillinger, my father, knew of a heading - and he filled a bucket, and another. For the real miners, bona-fide or otherwise, it was dangerous work.....)

23rd May

"Yesterday sennight, Job Luton, a coalminer of Mangotsfield was unfortunately killed in one of the coalpits in Kingswood by a great quantity of earth falling in on him." (FFBJ)

7th June

Three horses and the London waggon belonging to Mr Norman were struck by lightning whilst passing the new church, as were several workmen high on a scaffold. On 29th July two men and two boys taking shelter there were also struck. All recovered. (ibid)

27th June

The death was reported at Stapleton of Mrs Elizabeth Noblett who in partnership with Mr Wade kept "The Great Tea Shop". She was "one of the greatest dealers in tea and coffee in the West of England." She is buried at Christchurch, Bristol. (ibid)

29th August

Ed Puxton, the keeper of Lawford's Gate was committed to Newgate Gaol charged with stealing lead from the gate. value 8d (about 3p). The neighbours frequently heard him chopping something by night and one of them employed a ruse to enable him to get up on the top of the gate and see for himself what was going on. It was to settle a bet - he said - Could Mr Berkeley's house at Stoke be seen from there? It was found that several hundredweight of lead had already been removed, which the villain had sold in small quantities to various pedlars. (FFBJ)

(This seemingly answers the age-old riddle "who guards the guards?" The answer being nose neighbours.)

16th September

A lad who filled the coal carts at Screw's Hole (sic) suffered a fractured skull when a large coal fell off the cart he was loading. He was taken to the Infirmary with little hope of recovery. (ibid)

(Screw's Hole, otherwise Crew's Hole, is at St George)

30th September

A large wen (cyst) four pounds in weight was taken off a woman's thigh at St George, by Mr Grace, a surgeon. (ibid)

(The name Grace would become well-known in Kingswood a century later when H.M. Grace was the colliers' surgeon. One of his sons would make the name world famous. It is tempting to wonder if the above Mr Grace was the forebear of the great W.G.)

4th November

Thomas Newman was killed as he was mining coal at "Downing, Kingswood".

Six children were buried at St Philip & St Jacob on the same night who died of the whooping cough. (ibid)

John Wesley's ideas of discipline at the School seem not to have been wholly successful. It had proved impossible (for instance) for the boys to be supervised totally and a certain amount of "wickedness" prevailed. There were expulsions of the pupils and departures by the masters. A fresh start was to be made by twenty-two year old James Rouquet and on.....

26th December

..... we find him advertising for pupils:

Whereas it has long been complained of, that Children generally spend seven, eight and ten Years in learning only two or three Languages; and that together with these, they learn such Vices as probably they never unlearn more:

This is to give Notice

That in the Forest of King's-Wood, near BRISTOL, in a good clear air a BOARDING SCHOOL is now opened wherein are taught, at 14L per Annum - *English, French Latin, Greek, Hebrew, History, Geography, Chronology, Rhetoric, Logic, Ethics, Geometry, Physics: together with Writing in all useful Hands; Arithmetic, Vulgar, Decimal and Instrumental; Merchants' Accompts by Single and Double Entry; Trigonometry, Plain and Spherical; Surveying and Mapping of Land; Gauging in all its Parts; Mensuration of all Superficies, Solids &c at much less Expencc of Time than Usual: Where particular Care is also taken of the Morals of the Children, that they may be train'd up at once to LEARNING and VIRTUE,*

by **JAMES ROUQUET**

(Late of St John's College Oxford) And ASSISTANT

N.B. No Child is received above the Age of twelve years.

(Rouquet stayed at the school about three years. He became a famous "awakened" clergyman in Bristol, preaching in Newgate prison, particularly "condemned sermons" and accompanying the condemned to the gallows at St Michael's Hill.) (KWI)

The failure of the harvest in this year of 1752 was followed by another disaster, a cattle plague, probably foot and mouth disease. The suffering in Kingswood was intense and set the stage for the events of the next year.



1753

20th January

Stephen Orley fell into a marle pit at Beach Hill, near Stapleton and lay there fifteen hours until discovered. He was taken out paralyzed from the waist down and later died. (FFBJ)

Kingswood somehow got through the winter on short commons but there were no stocks of food to last until the next harvest. Such provisions as could be obtained were so dear they could not be bought. Whilst some quietly despaired, others gave voice to protest. John Cennick, the Moravian minister, who in the heady days of the Whitfield and Wesley conversions of 1739 had been Kingswood's first schoolmaster, returned to Kingswood from his other chapel at Tytherington and seemingly left behind his senses. For on....

25th March

.....he preached an extraordinary sermon. "Deliverance from Death" he called it and took as his text: "Jesus said that he that believeth in Me hath everlasting life. This is the BREAD that cometh down from Heaven that man may eat thereof and not die." (B154.02.ARL)

(He probably wanted to allay fear - "God will provide" - and quell the unrest which threatened to spill over into riot. But whilst the people starved such a discourse appears unbelievable. It would not have surprised me if the mob had burned the church down.)

The Mayor of Bristol, though, expected trouble from Kingswood. An obvious (and charitable) solution would have been to rush in supplies to his eastern neighbour. (Perhaps this is what Cennick expected). Instead, he warned of danger from the colliers, saying: "The place they come from is very populous and has in it a great number of underground workmen who are but little known and on that account are very desperate fellows."

21st April

A collier called Captain Ward was found dead in a coalpit at Siston. Foul play was suspected and two men (un-named) were questioned on suspicion of murder. There was no evidence and nothing further has been found in the newspapers about the affair. (FFBJ)

Early May

With little thought to the prevailing conditions, merchants in the city made a crass blunder. They bought up corn and loaded it on vessels in the Quay for export to Ireland. This news spread through Kingswood like a brush fire. Events then followed a predictable pattern.

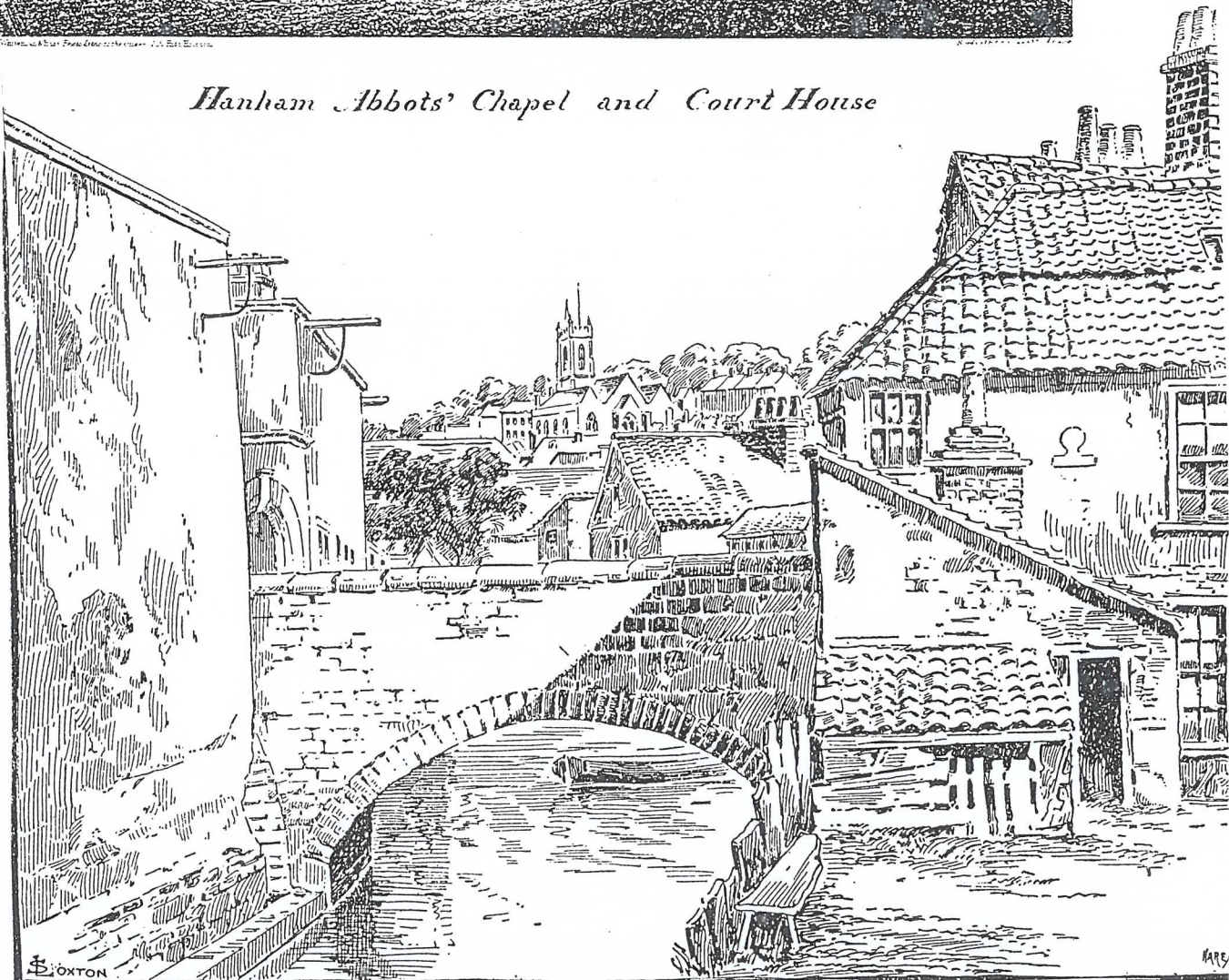
On Monday morning, the 21st May, a ragged army of colliers gathered in Kingswood under a captain and colours. As they straggled towards Bristol, the numbers, augmented by weavers and other poor people grew to several hundreds. Ravaged by hunger they attempted to fill empty bellies with the sprigs of green hawthorn which grew along the way, which in Kingswood parlance has been known until recently as "bread and cheese". They went immediately to the Council House where they informed the Mayor

reproduced by permission of Bristol Record Office



Hanham Abbots' Chapel and Court House

reproduced by permission of Bristol Record Office.



Bridewell Bridge over the River Frome where the colliers crossed in 1753.

they could no longer feed their families and begged him to stop the export of wheat. The Mayor asked for calm and said he would see what could be done. The colliers had not come to hear such nebulous words and would not be fobbed off. Some of the more hot-headed went immediately to the Quay where they began man-handling the cargo off the ships. In turn they were set upon by special constables wielding staves. Some jumped overboard into the mud. Others who made a fight of it "afforded a pleasant diversion to the spectators". John Paviour and William Jefferis were taken prisoner and conveyed to Newgate. The brawl continued back at the Council house where the colliers' stones broke all the windows and the constables went into action again, when "many of the mob had their heads broke and the captain, his arm."

The Kingswood people back beyond their own borders vowed a return visit to Bristol, to rescue the prisoners and take their revenge. The Corporation took this threat very seriously and swore in more "Specials" particularly from the gentry and tradespeople, who armed themselves with muskets, cutlasses and clubs and included the eager John Brickdale who had fought the colliers before in '49. A unit of the Scots Greys was summoned to re-inforce the citizen army and Bristol waited uneasily for the expected attack.

On Thursday, 25th May, the colliers massed again, this time with their women and children and stormed the City. They were unarmed apart from stones carried in the women's aprons. Finding the gates closed to them, they swarmed over Bridewell Bridge, but the City was ready. William Hill became the first casualty, shot dead in Bridewell Lane, when the guard "firing a few pieces among them, put them into such confusion they ran divers ways in order to make their escape". During the flight the trigger-happy citizens shot and killed three more men, Jonathon Crew, James Bryan and a man called Gunning. Twenty-nine were taken prisoner:

Job Phipps (who was dangerously wounded)		
John Sibley	Robert Randall	William Woodward
Edward Stanley	Francis Muntin	Emanuel Evans
George Owler	----- Muntin	Benjamin Crew
William Pater	John Kendall	George Gay
Elias Emory	Anthony Sawley	Nathaniel Crew
Charles Jones	Richard Holloway	John Legg
Samuel Iles	Jacob Sage	Thomas Maggs
Francis Iles	William Weekes	Samuel Bonner
		and four un-named.

The citizens, headed by John Brickdale were bent on rout. With "indiscreet zeal" they pursued the remaining colliers outside Lawford's Gate and along West Street, where William Fudge was brought down and killed. But here the rest of Kingswood waited and took on the citizens. John Brickdale became detached "and was beaten with many severe strokes from sticks and clubs but being a strong-bodied man kept to his feet and got clear off through the Ropewalk". Michael Millard (otherwise Miller) a Broad Street jeweller, "a thin-made weakly man", was "dreadfully wounded by the colliers, particularly in the head. He was brought home where his life was doubtful for a long while but after many months

recovered, bearing the marks of his wounds to the Grave". A young man by the name of Brown, an apprentice of Mr Hancock, haberdasher of Tower Lane, recklessly followed some colliers to Baptist Mills where he fired his musket at two of them, but missed both. He was disarmed and taken to a public house where the rebels debated what to do with him. If some had wanted to kill him, then others, more moderate, won the day, for he was taken to a disused pit, fed and well-treated. No ransom demand was issued and the youth was released unharmed on 2nd June, through the intercession of Norborne Berkeley, one of the Lords of the Kingswood Liberties.

31st May

Back in Bristol, the prisoners had lain in the filth and squalor of Newgate for over a week without medical attention. They made a humble plea to the Mayor that a surgeon be sent to dress their wounds. The request was granted.

By now, in the aftermath, some Bristolians felt that the citizen specials had over-reacted. (The regular troops had not been deployed at all, but had remained on alert outside the Council House during the entire Thursday melée.) Sympathy mixed with shame led certain "well disposed citizens" to take up a collection and "a great deal of provision" was sent outside the walls and into Kingswood where there were more than fifty seriously wounded, "some of them likely to lose their limbs". Edward West, the county coroner, held three inquests and brought in verdicts of wilful murder against John Brickdale, woollen draper, and Michael Millard. Brickdale, "fearing the colliers' revenge" and anticipating the inquest result was in London, lobbying the Duke of Newcastle at Westminster, and defaming Coroner West, who he said was a person of dubious character. The Government agreed, quashed the verdicts and pardoned Brickdale and Millard.

17th July

John Wesley went to Newgate to see the prisoners, and reported "At their earnest desire I preached to the colliers confined on account of the late riot. They would not hear the Gospel while at liberty. God grant they may profit from it now!"

4th August

There was to be a special tribunal to try the rioters although the ringleaders were still at large. The authorities announced a reward of £200 for Sampson Phipps and £100 each for Samuel Britton, John Wordy (or Woody), Hezekiah Hunt and John Summers. Kingswood had the reputation of looking after its own. They were never given up. (Sampson Phipps, senior, the uncle of the present Sampson Phipps was another member of the famous rescue squad of 1735 like John Summers' father - see 28th April 1750)

9th August

One of the colliers made a bold attempt to escape from Newgate dressed in women's clothes. He made it as far as the street but "had not gone many yards further e'er he was discovered and conducted safe to his lodgings". (Bristol Journal tells us his name was Iles but Gloucester Journal says it was Muntin.)

5th September

The Special Tribunal to try the rioters. Sampson Phipps, junior and Samuel Britton were found guilty of High Treason in their absence. Then Sir Sydney Stafford Smythe, Sir Richard Adams and the Mayor and Aldermen of the City began to deal with the small fry. To their exasperation they found nobody prepared to give evidence against most of the original accused. These were formally found not guilty and released. Of the remainder, Samuel Bonner, a weaver, was dealt with "leniently" because of his youth. (It can probably be safely assumed he was a boy.) He was sentenced to six months and fined 13/4d (66½p). To stay in prison until the fine was paid and then to find bail for his good behaviour, £40 for himself and his sureties, £20, for the following three years. George Olds, Francis Muntin, Robert Holloway, William Young, Nathaniel Crew, Benjamin Crew, William Jefferis and John Paviour were sentenced to two years, and fined 13/4d with the same conditions as Samuel Bonner. It amounted to a life - or death - sentence. They might just as well have been fined a thousand pounds. They were destitute and there was no hope of their being able to find such sums of money. Small pox, gaol fever and starvation awaited them. As they shambled away in their irons, Jefferis and Paviour were recalled to the dock to face an additional charge - that on the first day of the riot they had taken a hogshead of sugar from the *Lamb*, a ship bound for Dublin. This time they faced execution - but someone had blundered. The charge sheet was incorrectly worded. No-one in their hurry had examined the contents of the hogshead as to be certain it was sugar! (The accused had thought it was grain in any case.) This technicality saved their lives.

The dripping walls of Newgate closed around the Kingswood men, and nothing is heard of them again until 22nd December, when they thanked certain kind people, no doubt moved by the festive season, for the donation of 6d apiece.

FFBJ)

So ended the dreadful year of 1753.

1754

We find the prisoners still alive, for on....

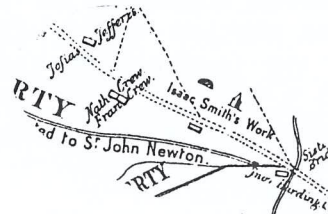
21st March

.....they advertised their plight:

"The poor unhappy colliers now under confinement in Newgate return thanks to their Worthy Benefactors for what relief they have already received and having nothing by Gaol Allowance to subsist humbly hope that some other well-disposed Christians will take into consideration their deplorable condition for whom they will ever be in duty bound to pray."

(FFBJ)

(Gaol allowance was two-pennyworth of bread a day, the solid half of the prisoner's traditional diet of bread and water. Felons in Newgate were obliged to hang out a begging basket into which compassionate passers by could drop alms. The above is the last that is ever heard of the '53 rioters. No records survive to show whether they were ever released. The



Newgate gaol calendars, ironically, were lost in another rising, the Bristol Riots of 1831.)

17th April

General Election. One of the candidates, Mr Nugent, as part of his manifesto reminded the electorate that he had prevented the importation of French bottles and by that means saved hundreds of families in the City from starving. Glassmen, colliers and coaldrivers he particularly besought to vote for him. He was elected, though without the help of the ONE enfranchised collier in the Kingswood area. He was Cyrus Cattle of Hanham, and he cared not a jot for French bottles, casting his votes for Beckford and Phillips. (Bristol Poll Book)

(Few men - and NO WOMEN had the vote. In order to vote at all it was essential to be a Freeman (or Burgess) of Bristol. A man could become a burgess by order of the Common Council, by completing an apprenticeship with a free burgess, by being the son of a burgess or by marrying the daughter or widow of a burgess. It is interesting that women had this small power. To some the whiff of corruption attached, for they made desirable catches. It is said that the agents of candidates would comb almshouses for elderly widowed or spinster decrepits who fitted the criteria and bribe them to marry men who, if enfranchised, had promised their support. The bridal pair immediately separated outside the church. A public ballot ensured that the voter could not renege on the deal by voting for another candidate.

15th June

The collier boys occasionally had time off from their deadly underground work. Inevitably some of their play was of a rough nature as is shown by the following report: "As some colliers were diverting themselves together in the Wood, one of them being forcibly pushed towards another with a wooden skewer in his hand, it penetrated his back above two inches. The lad was directly seized with a vomiting of blood &c but a surgeon being immediately to be had from Bristol, the Wound is not likely to prove mortal." (FFBJ)

27th July

"Mr William Bendall and Jane his wife of the *Green Dragon*, Downing in the parish of Mangotsfield were both violently troubled by the cholick but in taking a single draught were both totally cured. Mrs B. had been subject to it for 20 years past in a most terrible manner."

A testimonial for an advertisement for.....

....a CORDIAL DRAUGHT for the CHOLICK and all other GRIPING PAINS by Jeremiah Taylor, in the Old Market, near Castle Gate, price 1s 6d per bottle.) (ibid)

(The *Green Dragon* is still to be found at *Downend*.)

2nd November

On this day, my ancestors, Nathaniel Pillinger, a labourer and his wife Sarah, with their children John and Betty arrived on foot from Yatton Keynell in Wiltshire. They carried with them a settlement paper

which would allow them to live and work in Bitton provided they did not fall upon hard times and attempt to draw money from the parish.

3rd November

"William Millard, of Wick, a jobber in cattle, returning from Cheddar Fair, his horse going at full gallop fell and killed him on the spot."

1755

24th January

A rough map was drawn up showing "A plan of the ground granted by Mr Charles Bragge, esq. in the parish of Bitton in the Forest of Kingswood unto Lawrence Price, Mr William Webb & Thomas Britton, wherein they have liberty to work in the Great Vein, Primrose Vein, Two Foot Vein and Slate Vein or any other veins they find in the ground except the Slate Vein that is in the East side of a South line that goes to the second pit south of the Thwarting Level Pit to Gee Moor which belong to Josiah Brain and partners. Two shillings in the pound Lords Rent." (GRO)

1st February

"The famous boxing match between John Harris and John Slack will be decided Thursday next, the 6th, at ten. The champions will mount at two. Tickets to be had at The Bush and Rummer Taverns and at The Lamb Inn, without Lawford's Gate, the quarters of Mr Slack. Gallery 2/6d, court one shilling." (FFBJ)

(The advertisement also includes a touching request for the return of Pero, a liver and white pointing dog, lost by Mr Slack. Jack Slack, a Norfolk butcher was the fourth heavyweight champion of England and grandson of James Figg, the first holder of the title. He won the fight in six minutes. It appears he stayed in Bristol, for an entry in the burial register of St Stephens, 19th July 1768, records John Slack, "the noted boxer".)

4th July.

John Cennick, Kingswood's first schoolmaster, Moravian pastor and once a thorn in John Wesley's side, died in the London at the early age of 36. (DNB)

(Despite his silly sermon of 1753, he was the most human of Kingswood's three original missionaries.)

12th July

"A boat with men, women and children, in all eighteen persons, was overset at Screw's Hole. One was saved by catching hold of a dog's collar, the dog swimming in shore with her but she unfortunately lost the child from her breast which another woman saved by laying hold of it taking it for the stump of a tree. The river being narrow and the people being speedy in assisting them, they were all taken out alive and by the kind treatment of the neighbours are all preserved. (FFBJ)



27th August,

Nathaniel Pillinger was buried after only nine months in the parish of Bitton. Sarah his wife followed him to the grave on 13th September. Betty Pillinger aged nine was sent packing to Yatton Keynell whence they had come. Her brother John aged 15, and probably working as a coalminer was allowed to stay.

26th November

A lease was granted by Thomas Haynes, esq., to Henry Stone, Thomas Harris and Samuel Fudge, coalminers, to dig coal on the common at Breachyate (i.e. Bridgeyate) for 21 years. (BRO Haynes' Estate Papers)

27th December

"Mr Taylor a potter of Redcliff Street had his leg broke in a dreadful manner occasioned by the meeting of carriages and colliers' horses. A sack being forced off a horse's back for want of room which jostled him down and falling with it own weight, broke his leg." (FFBJ)

(Felix Farley added an impassioned plea for the widening of Bristol Bridge where such accidents were common.)

1756

26th January

Thomas Haynes issued another coaling lease, to Henry Stone, this time with Aaron Jefferis and Samuel Harding as his partners for 21 years to dig coal on "Breachyate" Common and on Churchleigh Hill. (BRO Haynes' Estate Papers)

(It is interesting that Churchleigh is being mentioned as late as 1756 for it is Kingswood's "lost" village. Churchleigh or Churchley between Wick and Siston was inhabited at least up to mediaeval times. It had its own church, St Bartholomew's, which predated St Ann's, Siston, although no records have survived. The inhabitants may have moved through plague or simply died out.)

7th April

Helen Creswicke, widow of Henry Creswick, Lord of the Manor of Hanham Abbotts and grand-daughter in law of Sir Henry Creswick, (knighted by Charles II in 1663), Mayor of Bristol, who bought the manor of Hanham in 1653, made her will.

In the name of God, I Hellen Creswicke of Hanham Court, in the parish of Bitton, in the county of Gloucester, widow, being in an indifferent state of Health and (God be praised) of sound and disposing mind, memory and understanding do hereby make my last will and testament in manner following: First I commit my soul to Almighty God, hoping to receive remission of my sins thro the merits and medication of my blessed saviour and redeemer, Jesus Christ and desire that my body may be decently buried in the same grave where my husband lies interred & as to my worldly substance I dispose thereof as follows:

Imprimis, I give and bequeath unto my two daughters Sarah and Susanna Creswicke all that my messuage or tenement and stable garden and

premises situate in Frog Lane in the city of Bristol, now let to John Clark, share and share alike a tennants in common.

To Sarah, my repeating gold watch with a gold chain to it, three chains of pearl, one large diamond ring and two other gold rings.

To Susanna, my other gold watch and gold chain and two chains of pearl, one green emerald ring set with diamonds and two other rings.

To my daughter Hellen my gold chain and locket, one witch is wash't in gold and my equipage, all my small pearls, two gold locketts, one red ring set with diamonds and one silver sauce boat.

To my son Henry Creswicke, my Chariot, one large diamond ring which was his Father's, one silver snuff box and a piece of gold three pounds twelve shillings value as a token of my love.

To my son Samuel Creswicke, one large stone ring, one silver snuff box and one piece of gold three pounds twelve shillings value as a token of my love.

To my Aunt Eves, three guineas.

To my sister Brockhirst, the like sum of three guineas for mourning.

To Sarah and Susanna, £500 and such plate, linnen and other things as were given them my late Aunt Opie.

To Mr James Boucher of London, gent, two guineas.

To Rev. Dr Creswicke, Dean of Wells, his brother in law, Mr Hammond of the city of Bristol and Mr Richard Parker of the same as trustees, for assisting the executrices and to take care of my papers and writings till my children come of age, to whom I give five shillings each.

To Sarah, Susanna and Hellen as tennants in common of my tenement at Stouts Hill in Bitton, now in tenure of ---- Hall and appurtenances; and all my wearing apparel and all the rest of my rings, jewells, moneys, effects and personal estate after funeral expenses paid &c to be equally divided between my three daughters and for them to be executrices.....in witness thereof.....signed Hellen Creswicke.

(Helen was born in 1711, the daughter of John Hart of Westbury on Trym. Of her children, Henry (born 1736) inherited the lordship of the Manor. Samuel (born 1740), unmarried, lived at Long Ashton, though died at Hanham in 1778. Susanna, (born 1735) married David Clark of Westerleigh at Bitton in 1764. Helen (born 1739) married Richard Barrow and Sarah married Reverend C. Elwes, the vicar of Bitton at St James's church in Bristol in 1779. Helen died in June 1757 and is buried at Bitton.

All was not as prosperous as it seems from the above. Francis Creswicke, Helen's father in law, who died in 1732, led an extraordinary life which included several spells of imprisonment variously for debt, for the attempted murder of the Irish Attorney General and for being involved

in the Monmouth Rebellion, a trumped up charge brought by his enemy, the influential Sir John Newton of Barrs Court with whom he was in almost continuous litigation. Legal fees crippled the estate, Hanham Court was mortgaged and the family was eventually reduced to ruin. Helen's legacies were presumably her own fortune, inherited from her father.)

21st April

"Last week, Thomas Isaac of Westerleigh, being impressed, cut his throat from ear to ear and 'tis thought he cannot recover tho' all possible means are used to save him." (FFBJ)

(Men were at this time pressed into both army and navy. The infamous "cut-throats and ruffians" of the press-gangs were locally active, going so far as to break into houses to drag out their "recruits". About this time Arne and Boyce were composing their jingoistic songs "Rule Britannia" and "Hearts of Oak", both in the bag patriotism for the theatre-going middle classes who idolised the jolly Jack Tars of the Navy and did not enquire too deeply into life on the ocean wave. The reality of life aboard ship or taking the King's shilling was the horror anticipated by Tom Isaac.)

5th June

"This week was committed to Gloucester Gaol by Charles Bragge, esq., Peter Crow for breaking into the dwelling house of Mrs Braine, a maiden gentlewoman and stealing therefrom near £50 in money." (FFBJ)

24th June

The first Friendly Society of Colliers was formed with the inaugural meeting held at the White Hart, Hanham where Will Cryer was landlord. The brave initial statement read thus:

We colliers, not willing to be burdensome to the parishes wherein we live have thought fit and convenient to join together in an orderly peaceable and brotherly manner to provide for the relief of each other in time of sickness and lameness.

Contributions were fixed at 10d per month and sick benefits paid five shillings a week "walking pay" and seven shillings for those confined to bed. Those injured fighting or mobbing were exempt. No drinking or smoking would be allowed during the monthly session - on pain of a fine of 2d. Sunday gambling was forbidden. Funeral benefit was £2 and widow's relief £3. There was to be a feast once a year on Midsummer Day and anyone quarrelling on this great and special occasion would be fined one shilling.

(The colliers were fearfully culled by accidents but even so they considered their work less perilous than that of the Crew's Hole smelters who died like miserable flies of lead poisoning. These wretched souls were denied membership of the society as being of too great a risk.) (EMss)

8th September

The foundation stone for the Moravian Chapel at Kingswood was laid by the Brothers Munster and Nyborg, the ground having been given by

24th September

In Bristol the good ship *Duke of Cornwall* was taking on a crew for a forthcoming cruise, probably to Africa. The following local men signed on:

William Lewis, Warmley
James Fuggall, Downend
John Fuggall, Downend
John Bryant, Downend
James Malpas, Warmley
Samuel Sweet, Kingswood (sadly drowned, November 5th)
William Sweet, Kingswood (discharged, December 8th)
John Turner, Downend
Jonathon Bisp, Winterbourne
Robert Brown, Bitton
William Lacey, Bitton (deserted) (MV Muster Rolls)

10th October

A monumental inscription at the parish church of St Mary's Bitton, and another seaman:

Beneath this stone secure from Storm or Tempest rests at peace the body of Captain Samuel Alden, native of New England. He was bred in the sea service from his youth in which dangerous employment by the Providence of God he was so successful as never to meet with an accident. After a passage of life of 45 years he launched into Eternity October 10 1757. To whose memory this Stone is erected by his truly afflicted widow Edith Alden." (BH)

(Who was this New England sailor, so far from his home port? And why was he in dry dock at Bitton? Edith married again - George Williams of St James's in Bristol - but she joined her first husband at Bitton when she died 29th November 1775 aged 55.)

29th October

"Fire broke out in the upper part of the school in Kingswood belonging to Mr Wesley but it happily did no other damage than consuming part of the bedding and cloaths of the children and damaging an upper storey window. (FFBJ)

(Wesley himself was acquainted with the news when he reached Hanham after preaching at Bath. "I felt not one moment's pain", he wrote, "knowing God does all things well." It appears that several of the boys discovered the blaze when going up to the gallery on an upper floor. The alarm was raised and Mr Baynes, one of the masters, ran for a pail of water. But (says Wesley, scathingly) he had "not the presceme of mind to go up to it, but threw the water on the floor." John Maddern (another master) and James Burges fetched more water and a ladder was put up against the wall outside. This ladder was half rotten but nevertheless, John How, a young man living next door, armed with an axe, made a run up it. The ladder was short of the roof, but he managed to get one hand over the battlements and heaved himself up. He made a vent in the roofing above the blazing room and "smoke and flames issued as from a

furnace". Those inside who waited with water went through the smoke to the door of the leads and poured it down through the tiling.)

(John Wesley; quoted KWI)

26th November

"Thursday last a fellow was taken to Gloucester Gaol for robbing the man who keeps the Marshfield turnpike." (ibid)

6th December

Isaac Flook was killed in a coalpit and buried at Westerleigh. (PRW)

1758

16th February

Articles of agreement drawn up between Thomas Haynes, esq., Christopher Williams and William Smith to be co-partners for 31 years in coalmining on Haynes's land at Wick and Abson. T.H. was to have half of all coal they raised. (Haynes' Estate Papers, BRO)

29th April

John Llewellyn killed in a coalpit and buried at Westerleigh. (PRW)

24th June

"Yesterday died after a long and painful illness at Kingswood School, Mr Parkinson, master of the school. A young gentleman of singular piety and learning who liv'd beloved by all and died universally lamented."

(FFBJ)

25th November

"At the *King's Head* Stokes Croft, John Ward of Kingswood, horsedriver was convicted of beating and abusing the collectors of tolls at Mangotsfield Turnpike. Fined £10."

(FFBJ)

(For much of the early 18th century, *Kingswood v. The Turnpike* was a long running series. Evidently feelings still remained very high. It was a huge fine and I wonder how (if?) he managed to pay.)

Let us end the year with two extraordinary boasts:

23rd December

"Last week died at The Waterworks, Screw's Hole, in the 104th year of his age, Adam Hartland, a collier. He continued driving horses to town within the last two or three years of his life."

(FFBJ)

30th December

"Last week the wife of Mr Chapman who keeps the *Roebuck* on Lawrence Hill was brought to bed of the seventeenth son. What makes it more remarkable is that she has had seventeen boys out of eighteen children and is now about 50 years of age."

(ibid)



1759

Footpads. We should call them muggers. *Plus ca change.*

27th January

"Wednesday night the son of Mr Crow who keeps a coffee house at Frenchay was returning home to Stapleton about 8 o'clock. He was stop't by a footpad who after striking the lanthorn out of his hand seiz'd him by the collar and demanded his money, whereupon another came up and clapped a pistol to Mr Crow's ear on which the first cried out "D--n thee, don't kill him!" However the hardened villain immediately fired, the slug entering just below the ear, passed along the back part of the neck and lodged deep in the muscles. They then threw him down and one lay on whilst the other rifled his pocket of a silver watch with an enamelled dial plate, maker's name James Donborough, no. 302, half a guinea, twopence and a pruning knife. A surgeon in the neighbourhood being sent for, cut out the ball and dressed the wound and Mr Crow is in a fair way of recovery. (FFBJ)

17th February

"Wednesday night last Mr Richard Builder of Frenchay was found in the road near that place and Stapleton so terribly beat and bruised that his life is almost despaired of. It is not known how much money he was robbed of for as yet he has only been able to say he was knocked down by two men. This piece of cruelty is supposed to have been perpetrated by those villains who lately shot Mr Crow near the same spot." (ibid)

(Nobody seems to have been apprehended for either offence)

17th March

"Two boys wantonly riding a mare with foal without Lawford's Gate, she threw them and treading on them burst out the guts of one and killed him on the spot. The other is much bruised." (ibid)

31st March

Advertisement: "To be Lett or enter'd upon immediately:
A handsome and commodious dwelling house situate in Lawrence Hill, having three good parlours, three kitchens and both sorts of water, also a baker's oven, stables and a large shop near the road fit for a baker or any other business who will meet with good encouragement. The whole will be put to good repair and let very cheap being convenient for a lodging house or a large family. Wherein Mr George Martin formerly liv'd and lately Andrew Vaughan. (ibid)

("Both sorts of water"? Possibly the spring water which was piped from Hanham passed through this house in Lawrence Hill and there was also a well in the grounds. I can think of no other possible explanation and would be glad of enlightenment.)



26th May

"We hear that another very handsome benefaction has been given towards finishing the Vicarage House at St George's in Kingswood by Edward Sampson, esq., amounting to 60L*" (ibid)

(*In the 18th century £60 (for example) was written thus 60L. This form continued well into the 19th century. I have been unable to ascertain when the familiar £ sign became the usual icon.

1760

5th January

"We hear from Pucklechurch that lately was married there a clergyman of near 70 years of age to his servant about 19." (FFBJ)

2nd February

"A few days ago, one Nurse Brain, a poor old woman upwards of sixty, near Grimsbury in Kingswood was burnt to death together with an infant in her arms. 'Tis supposed their cloaths caught fire while asleep whereby she was suffocated. The cries of the child alarmed the woman's son who immediately ran into the room but too late to preserve either his mother or child who expired in extreme agonies soon after." (ibid)

9th February

"Monday night one William Smith, a collier was found suffocated in a lime kiln without* Lawford's gate." (ibid)

(*It is interesting that we have preserved the use of the word "within" but its extremely useful opposite "without" has fallen to the more cumbersome "outside of".)

16th February

"Two men were attacked between the Upper and Lower Cupolas by a single footpad who presenting a pistol to one of them swore he would blow his brains out for that he was determined to murder somebody on the road on which they immediately seized him and took him to a neighbouring alehouse where he was secured 'till next day then carried before a justice who committed him to Lawford's Gate Bridewell." (ibid)

10th March

The children of the destitute were farmed out as "apprentices" to get them off the hands of the parish and to make them the responsibility of someone else. On this day there began the sad career of Solomon Chipper. Little Solomon was so delicate that William Sumption preferred to pay a fine of £10 rather than take him into his employment at Swineshead Wood Mills. Rejected, the Bitton overseers tried again: (BVM)

17th March

"Agreed to place out by indenture one Solomon Chipper to James Williams at an estate called Bath's." (ibid)

(But there would be more.....)

9th June

Francis Musgrave was killed in a coalpit and buried at Westerleigh. (PRW)

18th October

Rev. Mr Hart, Rector of St George married Miss Johnson of Cirencester. (FFBJ)

1761

In this year John Pillinger, the orphaned boy from Yatton Keynell, married Katherine Lear, a local girl, at St Mary's Bitton.

13th February

Daniel Plummer, killed in a coalpit. Buried Westerleigh. (PRW)

2nd April

Samuel Creswicke of Hanham granted to Samuel Holbin and Isaac Jefferies the liberty of mining coal in Oldland for 14 years. (206/17dcBRO)

29th August

"Yesterday sennight a boy digging coal in a coal barton at Screw's Hole, undermining it, it fell down and buried him. As no person was by when it happened he was not found 'till Sunday night." (FFBJ)

6th December

"It is ordered that the Churchwardens advance half a guinea reward to any person who will inform against unqualified persons carrying guns and shooting, particularly on a Sunday - to be paid on conviction." (BPO)

27th December

Job, the son of Richard and Ann Noble was buried at Siston, "his brains dashed out by falling into a coalpit." (PRS)

A bizarre happening attributed to the year 1761 is....

.....The Tale of the Head of the Collier's Son.

A young man out of Kingswood suffered a fractured skull in a mining accident and was taken to the Infirmary in Bristol where he died.

The surgeons and students had great difficulty in obtaining cadavers or parts of cadavers on which to experiment. Realising the opportunity they cut off the young man's head and put the remainder into a coffin which was generously provided by the Infirmary - (here the relatives should have smelled a rat immediately) - sealed it down and sent it into Kingswood. They obviously did not bargain for the local custom whereby all the neighbours file past the corpse (for a gawk) but ostensibly to pay their last respects. The coffin was opened. The outrage when the head was conspicuously absent can easily be imagined.

In the middle of the night the Infirmary apothecary was wakened by the enraged father and on enquiring what he wanted cried,

"Want? Damm thee. Why I do want my zun's ead and I'll ha un too or else I'll ha thine!"

The collier was sent to the surgeon who cried out somewhat timidly, "Who's there? Who's there?"

"Why I be here!" was the response. "I be Jack's father and thees got his is ead an if thee dussent gi un to I, I'll ha thine!"

The surgeon after some altercation fetched the cranium from the surgery. It was wrapped in a towel.

The collier, not to be deceived, unfolded the cloth and peeped inside. Recognition dawned. "Aye. aye, that's Jack!" he said, and threatening to give the surgeon "a dowse in the chops" went grumbling off into the night carrying the head. (HBRI)

1762

3rd January

A good send off.....

.....It was agreed by Bitton overseers that "Three shillings in future be allowed the clerk for ringing the knell, digging and filling up the grave, tolling half an hour before and ringing half an hour after the funeral of every pauper buried at the expense of the parish." (John Wright, the clerk was sent for and accepted.) (BVM)

19th February

Solomon Chipper, who had been apprenticed at parish expense in 1760 had been returned to the fold. He was amongst a list of children "on the parish" requiring masters. No-one took Solomon. The child was obviously sick. He grew worse. (ibid)

12th April

"Solomon Chipper to be taken to the surgeon re his rupture." (ibid)

(This did no good.)

6th June

"The overseers to find a proper place to board Solomon Chipper in order to be cured of his broken belly." (ibid)

2nd July

Thomas Cool, a lad, was killed in a coalpit. Buried Wick & Abson.

(PRW)

4th July

Solomon Chipper was to be boarded with William Hook for 3/6d per week. Mr Hook was ordered to keep him at school with Mr Fothergill. (The whereabouts of Mr Fothergill's school is not known, but presumably it was in Bitton village.) Solly's clothes were in rags and something had to be done. Mr Hook was told to rig him out with two caps, a coat, waistcoat, breeches and stockings at a sum not exceeding 30/-. (BVM)

31st July

"Monday was committed to Bridewell one Pool, a collier, for robbing a gentleman's summer house of some religious books which he brought to town in a sack to dispose of them. But at the very first shop he offered them (Mr Cherry's near Bridewell) he was stopp'd, poor Culprit! Though this may seem a little unlucky we hope that it may be a happy discouragement and that from his ill success he will not attempt the like again. Had he but half as much religion in his head as there was after in his sack, the summerhouse had not been robbed. Before the magistrates he pleaded that he was urged to it by the crying distresses of a hard family. Affected by this, the Prosecutor humanely deigned to drop the prosecution and discharge the prisoner, but going to his house with Mr Arthurs, Steward of the Cole-mines they found it stow'd with plunder, that is with various sorts of iron goods which he had stolen from the works which the Steward knew; this turned pity into resentment and justice is likely to take place." (FFBJ)

7th August

Richard Poole, charged with stealing printed books worth £1 was committed to Newgate.

14th August

Mrs Jefferies from Malmesbury, in Wiltshire was returning home from Lansdown Fair by way of Marshfield when her post chaise overturned near Toghill. Two footpads came up and demanded money. When she refused one drew out a long knife and threatened to murder her. They "were proceeding to put their bloody purpose into action" when a gentleman rode up and "the villains rode off without their booty". (ibid)

21st August

Richard Poole was sentenced to be transported beyond the seas for seven years. (ibid)

(This would have meant the plantations of the West Indies or Virginia.)

27th August

On this day, William Murray "an Irishman who was found murdered in Mr John Whittingham's Ox house, called Langton's Leaze" was buried at Doynton. (DPR)

4th September

"Yesterday sennight as a collier was returning home from this city he was thrown from his horse and killed on the spot." (FFBJ)

7th November

The Bitton overseers tried again to find a new master for Solomon Chipper. There were no takers. (BVM)

4th December

"Monday last was committed to Newgate, Isaac Barrett and Sampson Milsom charged with stealing 7 volumes of "The Spectator" value 7/- and one book called "Royal Magazine" value 1/- "Tis thought there is a gang

of thirteen, most of whom live in Kingswood with whom Barrett and Milsom were concerned in divers felonies in and about this city". (FFBJ)

(The preoccupation with books - as a saleable commodity - which none of the miscreants would have been able to read is as ironic as it is sudden.)

10th December

William Alsop, coalminer, son of John Alsop, killed in a coalpit. Buried Westerleigh. (PRW)

1763

1st January

"Monday next a battle is to be fought at the Tennis Court in Barton Hundred by Maggs versus Milsom." (FFBJ)

(Nothing further appears regarding the result of this bout, but Milsom had already beaten Maggs (from Pensford) twice. George Milsom was champion of England until defeated 27 August 1765. A former Kingswood collier, he became a baker in Bath (Milsom Street?). He fought Maggs again seven years later. The boxing ring was a means of escape from a dismal life underground and the area was famous for its bare-knuckle fighters, particularly the later champions, Brain, Cribb and Gully.)

6th February

Bitton Overseers of the Poor met at the Vestry.....

It was ordered that a female pauper called Parnel Kaines "be cloathed with two shifts, two pair of stockings, a pair of shoes, two caps, two handkerchiefs, a gown, two petticoats and two aprons."

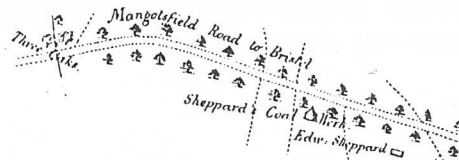
Before Parnel went mad with joy at the beneficence of this trousseau, I hope she metaphorically read the small print, for on the principle of waste not, want not....."the cloathes of the late Betty Powell are to be made use of as far as they will go for the above purpose."

Solomon Chipper had worn out or grown out of his clothes; he was still lodging with William Hook who was ordered to buy him a pair of breeches and a shirt. (BPO)

26th February

"Saturday morning was found in a coalpit in Kingswood a young woman about 20 years of age. 'Tis supposed she was going to her work at one of the pits but unhappily mistaking where the mouth lay, fell in and a was found dead in the morning." (FFBJ)

(This is the only instance I have been able to find of a woman killed at work in the pits.)



6th March

Bitton vestry gave up on Solomon Chipper; William Hook was "to send him home tomorrow with all his clothes and two shillings." Sarah Chipper (perhaps his mother?) was to be allowed "6d a week extraordinary till next month Sunday." (BPO)

19th March

Gloucester Assizes. Abraham Milsom and John Barrett, two boys, for robbing the dwelling house of Daniel Tucker and Hester Coulshaw and stealing six gowns were sentenced to be transported, also one was burnt in the hand, the other whipped. (FFBJ)

(This Milsom & Barrett may well have been the brothers of the two apprehended for the theft of books, 4th December 1762, and part of the infamous "gang of thirteen".)

7th May

"Tuesday morning, a lad throwing a stone near a coalpit in Kingswood unluckily struck the rope of a windlass whereby a man who was being let down in the pit fell and was killed instantly." (ibid)

21st May

"Yesterday, a poor woman who subsisted by bringing coal into this city on one horse would have been deprived of that subsistence by the horse's sinking under its burden near the Tolzey and breaking its thigh, &c had not some persons who were present exerted themselves by making a charitable contribution thereby enabling her to purchase another in the room of that which was obliged to be knocked in the head." (ibid)

11th June

"Wednesday sennight, a highwayman stopped a butter woman on Lansdown as she was returning from Bath market and robbed her of a guinea and a half in silver and likewise robbed a collier of 3/6d."

This was the only the start of the highwayman's rampage. He continued with the robbery of a gentleman's servant of five shillings at Toghill turnpike then turned up in Petty France where he followed another servant and robbed him at pistol-point of a watch and five guineas. The servant and the landlord of the pub at Petty France gave chase but he lost them at the Gloucester Road. Turning towards Wickwar, he attacked a pig-killer (who was also the licensee at the sign of *The Crown*) and lodged five slugs in him from the pistol.

The thief was described as "a short young man, most pitted with small pox, well mounted on a dark brown horse with a fine tail, though blind in one eye. One of the saddle stirrups was new, the other old. He had on a surtout coat." (FFBJ)

14th June

Thomas Harris of Hanham and Oldland, coalminer went to Benjamin Caines's house and called for a quart of ale, paying Lydia Caines, his wife, 3d. The house was unlicensed and Ben and Lydia were summonsed at the Gloucester Quarter Sessions. (EMSS Vol9)

(They would become the grandparents of the notorious Caines brothers of whom more anon.)

30th July

The highwayman was named as Daniel Neale, a clothier from Frome. As the justices burst into his lodging to take him, he cut his own throat saying "I might as well die first as last!" Sadly for him, he recovered, took his trial at Gloucester where he was sentenced to death. He was hanged on 13th August. At the gallows he behaved with decency and resignation. (FFBJ)

(...which was always a relief. Confession and penitence were hoped for at the very least. Some were like the condemned man who behaved "disgracefully, employing his time in every diversion the gaol could afford. At the fatal tree his behaviour was shocking, refusing to pray with the clergyman and damning the executioner for not despatching his business in a better manner, telling him he was not fit to hang a dog, much less a man. But just before he was turned off he desired erring youth to beware of drunkenness.")

20th August

"Saturday night, a collier laden with more than he could conveniently carry home tied his horse to some rail and laid him down to rest in Ellbroad Street. Two men coming upon him robbed him of 50 shillings by cutting his pockets from his breeches. They also took a large pair of silver buckles from his shoes. Some boys on the other side of the street called out and they made off up Back Lane. Two men were secured without Lawford's Gate but as nothing was found on them they were discharged but they have been obliged to give bail." (ibid)

27th August

"The Cyder Exciseman who was some time since seized by the colliers in Gloucestershire and carried into their subterraneous regions is still in the pit with them and they positively declare he shall not have his liberty till the Act is repealed. Several persons belonging to the Excise in the Cyder Counties have resigned their commissions." (FFBJ)

(A tax on cider had roused the colliers wrath and they were not alone. In Somerset an excise man had his horse's ear cut off and was threatened with the same himself if he did not take himself off.)

1st October

"As a bull was baiting at Points Pool without Lawford Gate, a man standing within the ring had the misfortune to have his eye gored out." (ibid)

(Difficult - no, impossible - to feel any sympathy.)

8th October

Died at Hanham, Mary Iles aged 104 years and nine months; her husband was said to have died 9 years before aged 102. (ibid)

13th December

"Catherine Pillinger committed by Charles Bragge and Henry Creswicke, Esqrs. having been convicted in the penalty of Ten Pounds for

an offence committed against the Excise Law and for want of Sufficient Goods and Chattells whereon to Levy the same."

(My Great Great Great Grandmother was listed in "A Calendar of the Criminal Prisoners in the County Goal (sic) at Gloucester at the Epiphany Sessions, January 10th 1764. It is impossible to be certain how long she stayed "in Goal"; certainly there is a four year gap in the baptisms of her children. She must have been released before May 1766, as her third child was christened at Bitton 22nd February 1767.)

1764

11th February

"To be Lett: A Coaling Lease in the Common and Waste Lands within the Manor of Yate. Enquire of Messrs Tyndale & Hall, Wine Street, Bristol or of Mr Cater Green at Yate aforesaid. (FFBJ)

31st March

"Last Thursday, a man that worked in one of the melting houses at the Cupelo near Screw's Hole, unfortunately scalded himself with the boiling metal in a such a manner that he expired soon afterwards in the greatest agony." (ibid)

28th April

"'Tis said two lads, born without Lawford's Gate were to be executed at Tyburn yesterday for a felony." (ibid)

5th May

"Saturday last, one Stone, a collier, returning home had the misfortune to fall from his horse and break his back of which he died soon after." (ibid)

2nd June

William Walter of Westerleigh committed to Gloucester Castle for killing James Walter in an affray. (ibid)
(A family quarrel?)

8th December

"One day last week as John Pritchard of Westerleigh was returning from Chippenham, he was robbed by two highwaymen of 2L.16s.3d. They afterwards returned part of the money and rode off." (ibid)
(!)

Same day

"Saturday, committed to Newgate, Phillip Griffith for stealing one horse hair sack, value one shilling and a leather girth and strap, the property of Michael Isles, coalminer." (ibid)



1765

2nd February

Fire broke out at the starch house belonging to Mr Phillips in Lower Easton, but a Mr Stone "sent the companies' men, engine & buckets" and it was controlled without great damage. At the same time, only half a mile away, Messrs Bazil's horse engine caught fire, but was likewise extinguished.

16th February

"Sunday night an incendiary letter was put under the door of George Tizard, cutler, of West Street, without Lawford's Gate.

"Mr Tizard you are the Divil of a Man that you are Desired to put under the Door to Night 5 pound and if you dont put it there you shall be burnt in your bed alive and if you put it there you shall not be burnt. If I find the door fast I will break it open and come in and will drink a Glass of Rum with you. Do what I tell you of before and it shall be done. This Accedint is to be done because you dont spend your time like myself in evil for if you did this should not come upon you for any account."

2nd March

"Early Monday morning as one Francis Harris was going to his work in a coalpit in Kingswood he was seized by two fellows who threw him to the ground, filled his eyes and mouth with dirt and after much threatening language robbed him of his watch and what else he had in his pockets and then took off. (FFBJ)

9th March

"Wednesday died at his house in St James's Barton, Mr Thomas Colby, a considerable proprietor in the Brass Works at Warmley and one of the people called Quakers." (ibid)

13th June

Information was laid to Henry Creswicke, esq., J.P., by Richard Joy on oath that at 3 a.m. the previous Monday morning he had been violently beaten at Windmill Green, Hanham and Oldland by Robin Peacock, William Morgan and Nathaniel Crow, all coalminers of Hanham and Oldland without any provocation. (EMSS Vol9)

8th August

We have already noted the digging of illegal pits by those trying to strike it rich, so that they too could be "Made For Ever!" the jubilant cry of successful adventurers which of course became the name of a whole Kingswood district.

James Vaughan, steward of Thornbury Castle issued the following veto on one such:

"Zechariah Townsend. Take notice that I do hereby forbid you to sink any other pit for raising of coal or otherwise within the manor, otherwise liberty and fee of Oldland." (GRO.D108/M187)

And it was going on all over the Forest. The Mangotsfield Vestry Minutes: "A complaint is entered against Mr Thomas Bayley of Moorend that he did make pits and carry away soil and turf at Bury Hill and did become a nuisance to the neighbours thereby."

10th August

The following piece appears in the Bristol Journal for this date:

KINGSWOOD - A FRAGMENT

*"Here a rude cottage stands in mould'ring mud
The bleak wind whistles through its gaping sides
The children feed upon the floor, naked and starving
Or with bread and water fed while poor parents,
lab'ring at the mines
Are digging night and day to starve along!
Behold! a place dreadful to the traveller benighted!
In ages past a coalmine four score fathom deep
What art, what industry, what danger great
To enter and to empty the bowels of the earth!
How many thousands in the world would not
For gold descend so low - while Kingswood
Swarms with those who venture but for bread?
And cheerful labour through the darkened day
Depriv'd of thy blest beams, thou glorious Sun!
But not of thy great Maker
Thou Almighty deign'st e'en there to dwell
Dealing content around the dreadful gloom!
From sire to son thus have they labor'd on
For ages past, rude and robust as Afric's tawny sons
And dauntless as the intrepid Roman came
When hostile Caesar dar'd Britannia's shore
But - shame to utter - in this happy isle
Where pure religion bears the fountain sway
Where faith and charity erect their front
Strangers to human and the laws divine
Till W..... late with serious truths awoke
The sleeping images of God
Now do they bow the knee and bend with awe
Now when a brother or a father falls
(For death makes dreadful havoc in the mines!)
Devotion wafts the parting soul to bliss
Now schools are formed and sacred temples rise
And the black multitude assemble all
And with united faith
Unbar the gates of everlasting life
Courting the entrance of the King of Glory!"*

E. W.

(So that was all right then. It was hell on earth and particularly so in Kingswood but everybody eventually went to heaven. Whilst I am grateful to E.W. for his portrayal of Kingswood, I cannot but believe he was one of those people who regret they were not born thirty years ago as everything possible has now been done.)

28th October

It is appropriate here that we should get a glimpse of E.W.'s "W.....". On this day in London, John Wesley met George Whitfield, Kingswood's evangelist who brought about "the great stir" of 1739 when the whole of the neighbourhood was convulsed by religious fervour, and since had become somewhat muted. Wesley was aghast at George's appearance. He was "an old, old man, fairly worn out.....though he has hardly seen fifty years." (DNB)

2nd November

"Last Monday in the forenoon, a poor man coming to this city was stop't near the Fishponds by two colliers who took from him his hat and then let him pass on; however not fully satisfied with this plunder, they repeated their attack near the turnpike and seized his knapsack in which there was a coat, waistcoat and some other wearing apparel. 'Tis suspected these two fellows are old offenders and well known in the neighbourhood. (FFBJ)

7th December

"We hear that fresh application is intended to be made to our worthy corporation not only by the inhabitants of this city but likewise the neighbouring gentlemen to remove that long complained nuisance, Lawford's Gate. (ibid)

(Ed Puxton was long gone and so probably was the remainder of the lead!)

28th December

"Sunday night some fellows broke into a house called *The World's End* without Lawford's Gate and stole therefrom the furnace and boiler bars and doors together with divers articles of wearing apparel, the amount upwards of 40 shillings." (ibid)

(The pub with the unique name has stood at least since 1626 when a certain Elizabeth Wealsh was buried (at St Philip & St Jacob's churchyard) from there. It still exists "without Lawford's Gate" at the edge of the civilised world, St George. Beyond lie the badlands where only the most intrepid dare to tread!)

1766

8th February

"Mr Armitage, an officer in Excise, crossing some parts of Kingswood to his house in Screw's Hole unluckily passed too near a coalpit that on his foot slipping he fell in where he remained till next morning, about 11 o'clock, calling in vain for assistance. At length, despairing of help from others he resolved to exert the utmost effort to extricate himself which after two or three trials he happily effected. He is much bruised and was insensible of it until after he got out. This pit is four fathoms deep." (FFBJ)

8th March

"Tuesday a man coming in a coal barge from Bath to Hanham, accidentally fell overboard near Swinford and was drowned." (ibid)

15th March

"For Sale by auction at Exchange Coffee House, Wednesday, 26th, next:

One sixth part of Blackswarth Coalworks near the Royal Table in the parish of St George's with a very good Fire Engine, Dwelling House, Warehouse, Stables, Smith's shop, four sheds for Horse Walks with five horses and every other material and Utensil for coaling.

In these works are several very good veins of coal now in working which is part of the estate of Joseph Hall, deceased, accomptant of this City which will be absolutely sold with resolve to the best bidder" (ibid)

(Joseph Hall's will was made in 1763 and proved the following year; he stated "as John Cribb is lately dead and his son keepeth his share in the cole-work I desire my partners will let my executor in trust keep my one sixth share thereof until the said cole-lease do expire being 10th April 1766." The site of the coalworks is commemorated by a pub called *The Fire Engine*. It was not a wheeled vehicle pulled by horses to put out fires as we might expect but the engine which drove the mine winding and pumping machinery and the precursor of the railway engine.)

10th May

Michael Lynes of Bitton, killed in a coalpit, was buried at Siston. (SPR)

5th July

"The Cyder Act" which had caused such rage in 1763 was repealed. The joyous farmers of the cider counties declared: "They shall submit to their posterity the Anniversary of that day as a perpetual holiday." (FFBJ)

13th September

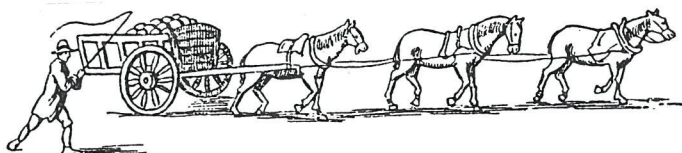
"A coalminer in Kingswood was killed by the falling in of the pit. He has left a wife and six children." (ibid)

2nd October

High food prices sparked off riots in many parts of England. The "Public Advertiser" suggested that the colliers of Kingswood were likely to join in these protests but our local press makes no mention of any incidents. The colliers, influenced by the Methodists, who so impressed E.W., the fragmenteer (10 August 1765) and cowed by repeated defeat had become quiescent and docilely began to rely more on contributions of conscience.

13th December

"Wednesday morning a woman was passing the road near the New Church by the side of a loaded waggon, a fellow riding the shafts of his cart drove so furiously by as to thrust the poor woman down and the wheels of the waggon went over her and killed her on the spot." (FFBJ)



1767

3rd January

"Wednesday night, a boy going to light a candle at the side of a pit in Kingswood accidentally fell in and was dashed to pieces." (FFBJ)

31st January

"We are informed that the principal inhabitants of the outparish of St Philip and St Jacob, taking into account the Distresses of the Industrious poor have entered into a subscription for their Relief and are determined to supply them with good household bread at one penny per pound, good boiling pease, 3d per quarter and best rice at three half pence per pound which will be delivered out from the Poor House on Wednesday and Saturday (Pease and Rice, Saturdays only).....all donations to Mr Daniel Pidding in Gloucester Lane, Mr Edward Dugdale and Mr Robert Peters in West Street without Lawford's Gate. A committee of eight persons has been chosen by subscribers who have gone from house to house and there appears to be upwards of four hundred necessitous families that have no relief from the parish." (ibid)

7th February

A further sign of the desperate times: "a poor woman was found dead in George's street without Lawford's Gate. It is generally supposed that she was starved as she had been loitering in the neighbourhood for some days." (ibid)

In response to the appeal by Mr Dugdale and his friends, the Mayor and Corporation gave £14, the Brass Warehouse Company 5 guineas, Mr Edward Southwell, 10 guineas, an anonymous donor, 10 guineas along with several smaller donations. By.....

14th March

Another 5 guineas had come in but that was all. "Nothing by way of further contribution has fallen into their hands, they must be under the necessity of discontinuing any further distribution." Spring was on the way and nothing is heard about the charity until the next winter.

Those who had the strength to walk could go out to Warmley where there was a new marvel to look at: "A Fire Engine of a curious construction was set going at the brass works which is thought to be the largest in Europe. It throws up 20 hogsheads of water at a time and eight times a minute." (ibid)

1st May

The Bitton Vestry was still chuntering on about illegal prospecting and on this day invited the freeholders to meet at 8 a.m. the following 8th May "to look over all intruders and inclosures on the common and also take a proper view of all gates and stiles put up by Samuel Brain at parish expense." BVM)

6th May

Obituaries. "Died at Mangotsfield, Mr Sartain, who formerly belonged to the Stage Waggoners of this City" and.....

....."Tuesday last one Joseph Tyley, a shoemaker, hang'd himself in a wheel house near a coalpit in Kingswood. 'Tis imagined real want was the occasion of his doing it. He has left a large family." (ibid)

23rd May

"Last Saturday, married at Mangotsfield, Mr Hawkings, a very considerable farmer and grazier, aged about 60 and Miss Molly Barkley, now in her 18th year, remarkable for her sense and beauty." (ibid)

(Obviously! In view of the foregoing, being miserable in comfort had definite attractions.)

1st June

The parish of Bitton lacked a very desirable amenity - a workhouse. People with suitable premises where the poor of the parish could be placed were invited to remit their proposals at John Selden's, the sign of the *White Hart*. On the 9th June Thomas Burnell's house was selected. (BVM)

25th June

Innoculation - the virus taken from smallpox postules - had been practised in the East for centuries. The idea was brought to this country by travellers like Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu and gradually became extensively practised until superceded by Jenner's discovery of vaccination. It was a dangerous business, as Felix Farley was quick to note in this scathing editorial: "We hear that the innoculators of Barton Hundred (who would assume themselves alone with the knowledge of this Mysterious Operation and have left no stone unturned to prejudice the Public in that Opinion) have been so very successful as to turn out a patient in a fortnight as cur'd in their new method who has since his return home been attacked by the smallpox and is now under treatment at the Boar's Head."

12th September

"Sunday evening was committed to Gloucester Castle William Marks of Bitton, charged with wilful murder. This ill-fated man had ever lived in perfect harmony with his wife by whom he had many children and well supported them but correcting one of them for some fault and the mother thinking him rather too severe interposed in consequence of which he gave her such repeated blows on the head as killed her on the spot." (FFBJ)

19th September

At Carmarthen Assizes, Edward Higgins of Frenchay was found guilty (after a jury deliberated nine hours) of breaking into the house of Lady Maud, near Laugharne and sentenced to death. It was said he behaved with cheerfulness during his trial but seemed much affected when sentence was passed.

William Marks, in Gloucester had lapsed into melancholia, "shunning all fellow prisoners and giving himself up to serious reflection of his rage." (I have not discovered his fate which seems a foregone conclusion.)

Higgins's friends made strenuous efforts throughout the month to obtain a reprieve and he was respited several times whilst these pleas

wended to and fro. However, by late October he was kept in a barbaric condition, "chained to the floor and closely eyed by the keeper. He is truly penitent as becomes one whose end draweth near." (ibid)

October

The Court Leet met at Oldland. Still chief on the agenda was the perennial irritation of unlawful digging. "We present Henry Rogers to filling up his severall pitts in Cadbury Heath to be done by Christmas next in the penalty of 20 shillings and a common nuisance. Also Mr Samuel Whittock to presently fence his colepitts nere on the highway at Cowhorne's Hill, to be done by Christmas next, etc." (GRO D108/M187/8)

19th December

The year which had begun with charitable appeals to relieve starvation went out on a desperately tragic note.

"A poor woman in Kingswood hanged herself in a stable and was not discovered 'til she was quite dead. It seems the cause of her rash action was owing to her husband, a collier, having lost several of his horses by the present endemical distemper which occasioned his going behindhand to the amount of £4 to the coalpit. She had with great difficulty that morning raised 2 guineas in order to help discharge the debt but the inexorable creditor declared his resolution not to take less than the whole and arrest her husband immediately less 'twas paid. Struck by the impossibility of raising the sum wanted and dreading the consequence of her husband's confinement having three very small children to support, she returned home and after weeping over and embracing her infants gave way to her despondency." (FFBJ)

John Wright, parish clerk since 1758 counted the number of persons in the parish of Bitton, including Hanham and Oldland: 4634.

1768

In this year Norborne Berkeley was financially ruined, but ruin like everything else is relative. It was a hard winter and the London Road through Kingswood became impassable because of the deep snow. The collier families were once again on the brink of starvation.

9th January

"The Parish of St George, Kingswood contains between two and three thousand inhabitants, the majority of whom are always poor and labor under the perculiar misfortune of having no wealthy patrons within their own circle.....domestic comfort in every class of society and in every stage of life depends on the health and vigour of the laborious colliers....it is therefore humbly hoped that those in whom the heart of charity is warm, this hint will meet with favourable regard...every little gratuity will be thankfully received and prudently applied." (FFBJ)

(This grovelling plea aroused one reader at least, who wrote to *The Journal* at considerable length and fury.)

16th January

The anonymous writer complained that an Act of Parliament had divided St Philip & St Jacob from St George but that the concerns of the poor in both parishes were to be dealt with in common. Why, he demanded, had not St George benefited from the previous fund when "such bounty should have found its way to the refreshment of the huts of Kingswood" and went on "Nothing but a principle of heartfelt compassion has thus drawn forth in the public theatre an advocate for the starving colliers who besides their natural claim as *MEN* to the benevolence of their fellow creatures have this further plea to urge that they are the servants of Bristol and should be no less regarded by their masters than those who are employed in a private capacity whenever by a stroke of Providence they fall victim to insurmountable distress." (ibid)

(The two funds that week stood at £7.0s.6d for St George and £18.8s.6d to Mr Dugdale's fund for the outparish of St Philips. Nobody replied to the colliers' champion and the response to both charities seems to have been fairly measly.)

17th February

Joseph Johnson was killed in a coalpit and buried at Siston. (SPR)

19th April

"Last week two young men were much hurt in a coalpit at Two Mile Hill that one is since dead and Monday a young man fell twenty fathoms in the same pit and broke one thigh and one arm that there are little hopes of his recovery." (FFBJ)

25th July

"Bristol: Tuesday last drawing up a basket of coal at one of the pits at Whitehall near the city, the rope of the windlass broke and a man that was standing under it had his brains dashed out." (Bath Chronicle)

6th August

"An elderly woman returning from Mangotsfield who had been to receive pay from the parish was struck dead by lightning under a tree in Kingswood where she sheltered with a little boy who received no damage. It is remarkable that there were no marks on her body tho' her hat, cap and garters were torn to pieces." (FFBJ)

20th August

Possibly the most unlikely of all the coalpit tragedies: "Last week as a dog was coursing about Kingswood, he fell into one of the coalpits by which means a man was struck out of the basket as he was coming up and was killed on the spot." (ibid)

1st October

"Sunday last died at Screw's Hole, Stephen Radford, one of the older copper smelters of that place and the Tuesday following his wife Jane. They were buried in one grave Wednesday night at St Philip's churchyard. They have left behind five children, two of them young and unprovided for. There were upwards of 200 men and women attended their funeral." (ibid)

(It has been shown (1756) that the smelters were refused entry into the Kingswood Friendly Society. Singling out Stephen Radford as one of "the older workers" must mean that the majority of these workers died at a much younger age. Danger too is relative.)

1769

6th February

Bitton Vestry demanded that John Butcher's two children "be annointed for the itch". (BPO)

25th March

died Mrs Ward, wife of Mr Ward, pinmaker of Warmley. (FFBJ)

1st April

"Sunday morning, two children, the eldest no more than five years old were left by themselves in a house in Kingswood and one of them playing too near the fire, his clothes caught and before any assistance came the child was so burnt as to occasion his death a few hours later. (ibid)

14th April

An unpleasant development at Bitton Vestry. It was "ordered that the Overseer shall make the poor relieved weekly to wear the badge." BVM)

(It was no longer enough just to be poor; they had to be shamed as well. There are not a few people who would be adverse if this were allowed to happen today).

29th April

"Saturday last as three boys were sleeping near the edge of a coalpit at Whitehall, one had the misfortune to fall in." On Monday he was brought out dead. (SFBJ,FFBJ)

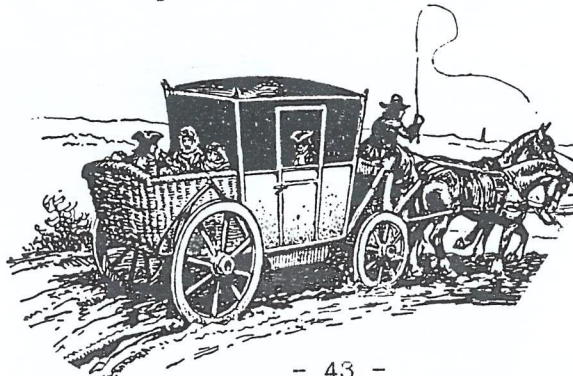
6th May

"Yesterday morning at 4 o'clock the coalpit at the Fire Engine fell in but happily, no lives were lost." (SFBJ)

Thomas Dunn, a yeoman of St George was among the unhappy debtors who languished in Bristol's Newgate prison. (ibid)

31st May

A warrant was issued by the parish of Bitton to apprehend a certain "Black Harry" alias Henry Smith, a post chaise driver of Castle Hill, Speen, Berks, who was reputed to be the father of Ann Short's expected infant. (PB.OP/9/2.BRO)



24th June

A "great bruising match" took place between William Stephens, a nailer and George Milsom, Kingswood collier at the Circular Stables, Stokes Croft, before several thousand spectators "including gentry and nobility". Bets were in favour of the nailer but a few hours before the contest odds of 6 to 4 were laid on Milsom who became the favourite of "the knowing ones". The collier won by an easy knock-out and it was believed that Stephens "sold the right" and took a dive. "It cannot but be supposed that our heroes had the following lines at heart:

He that fights and runs away
May live to fight another day
But he that is in Battle Slain
Will never rise to fight again."

(FFBJ & BMBJ)



Bill Shephens, the nailer.



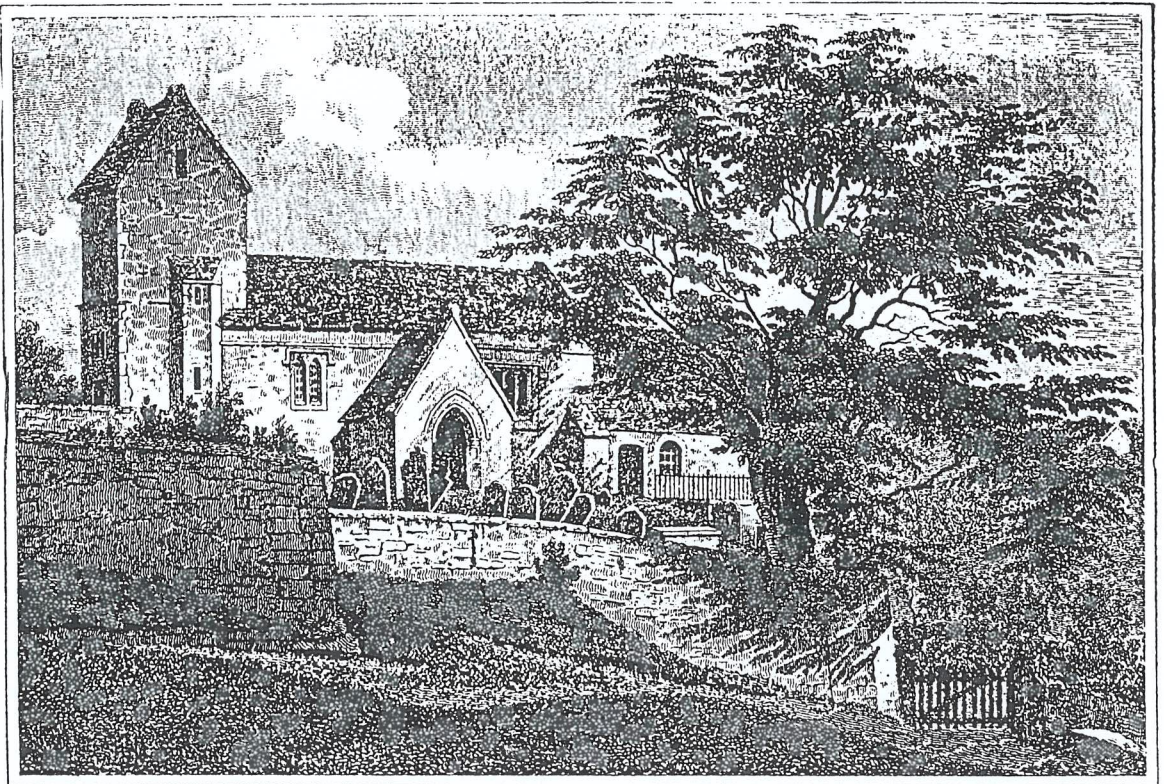
Jack Slack

reproduced by permission of Avon County Library



A typical Kingswood single storey cottage (still inhabited in 1919)

reproduced by permission of Bristol Record Office



Chapel of St Anne at Oldland.

1st July

"We hear that last week a Kingswood collier was detected in having defrauded a housekeeper of this city of a horse load of coal for which he was made to pay five shillings as Smart Money which was put in the poor box at the Infirmary. (FFBJ)

(*Smart money* = a fine. From *Smart* = a stinging blow)

1st November

Ann Short gave birth to a son but Black Harry was still missing.

11th November

"Last week married at St Phillips, Mr Charles Stokes aged 80 and Mrs Ann Brown aged 23, both of Lawrence Hill." (FFBJ)

1770

A remarkable architectural event. The Tippett family, lifelong supporters of John Cennick and afterwards of the Moravians, built the first "Chummer-High" house in Kingswood. The building occasioned great wonder as everyone else (apart from the gentry) lived in one storey huts, erected between sun up and sun down to ensure squatters' rights.

(Braine. HKWF)

3rd March

Samuel, James and Arthur, the sons of Dando and Elizabeth Thomas were all buried at Siston in one grave "of the smallpox". (PRS)

26th May

"A bruising match between George Maggs of Pensford and George Milsom of Kingswood was decided on Leigh Down near this city within four minutes in favour of Milsom. Many of Maggs's friends laid bets of 2 to 1 against Milsom." (FFBJ)

(This time there was no suggestion the fight was fixed.)



George Maggs

11th June

Thomas Weaver, pinmaker, was to employ all the children in the Bitton Workhouse. Rates of pay were drawn up:

After the first month	9d per week
After 1 year	1 shilling per week
After the 3rd year	1/3d per week
After the 4th year	1/6d per week.

2nd July

A lively meeting at Bitton Vestry.

"It was agreed that William Farley shall make information against John Butcher for his insolentce and assolting him to be paid at the parrish expense through his behaviour at a parrish meeting held the 2d of July 1770 and for his running away and leaving his family chargeable to the parrish and the officer taking the said Butcher up and procecute him aforesaid." (BPO)

(The poor were supposed to know their place and not answer back and definitely not swing a punch at the overseers. No reference was made to the Butcher children's itch.)

27th July

Mangotsfield followed Bitton in forcing its poor to wear "The Badge". The women paupers in particular were "insubordinate" in submitting to this cruel branding. (Emlyn-Jones, OPM)

28th July

"Sunday evening a boat coming down the river from Hanham in which several persons had been in a party of pleasure overset near the Slip at St Philips by which accident a young woman was drowned." (FFBJ)

29th September

"Sunday evening between 7 & 8 o'clock Mr Gauntlett of this city was returning home from Marshfield when he was set upon by a footpad about half a mile from St George's Church, who missing his attempt to lay hold of the bridle stabbed his horse in a terrible manner, supposed with the tuck at the end of a stick by which the horse took fright and ran away. He was about six foot high and had on a white waistcoat." (ibid)

30th September

George Whitfield died at Newburyport, Mass. U.S.A.

4th October

Oldland Court Leet Day. Michael Short was fined ten shillings for making a disturbance and calling the jury "a parcell of gawkam fools." (GRO D108 M187/8)

1771

16th February

Samuel Walter, was killed in a coalpit and buried Westerleigh. (PRW)

2nd March

"Last Tuesday was committed to Newgate, Grant Cottle, late upholder of Thomas Street for robbing his mother's sister, Elizabeth Grant of 80L plus linen and plate. A few evenings before he forced the lady into a carriage and after stopping her mouth with a handkerchief conveyed her to a private house in Kingswood under pretence of her being insane and immediately returned and rifled her house." (SFBJ)

(Cottle was sentenced to death but surprisingly reprieved before the judge left the city of Bristol - see Bristol Gazette, 11th April. An upholder was an upholsterer of furniture.)

9th March

"Yesterday sennight a lad of about thirteen was working at the bottom of a coalpit near St George's church when a stone fell from the top and pitched upon his head and killed him on the spot. (ibid)

13th April

A barn belonging to Farmer Lennott of Fryfter's Court Mangotsfield was burnt down. (ibid)

17th July

"Sunday a man fell in a coalpit at Kingswood and was killed on the spot." (FFBJ)

29th August

"A reputable apothecary" successfully appealed against being named as the father of a baby born to a woman known as "Kingswood Nan". The court over-ruled an earlier decision when it was found that Nan had gone about extorting money from a variety of men each one of whom she told was the father. (BG)

19th September

More extravagant obituaries: "Died at Coalpit Heath in the parish of Westerleigh Mr Isaac Nash, farmer aged 104 and the day he was buried, his wife died aged 114. They lived together as man and wife for 81 years." (ibid)

Same day

Apparent evidence of divine intervention: "Some colliers returning from Bath, one of them observing a hay mow went and got upon it and taking some in his hand swore by G-d it was very good and added he would be d-mm-d if he did not have some of it but suddenly his foot slip't and falling down, pitched on his head and instantly expired." (ibid)

1772

27th February

Some persons broke into the house of Hester Legg, of Hanham, (described "a poor widow"), whilst she was out at work and stole a silver watch (maker's name John Adams, London), 5 gold rings (2 stone, 3 plain) 1 large pair of silver buckles, 3 silver tablespoons, 1 pair silver sleeve buttons and 1 bosom buckle. (BG)
(which does not seem to be evidence of poverty!)

4th July

"We are desired to inform the public that the battle intended to have been fought between Francis Milsom and James Slack on Monday next is intirely stop't by order of the magistrates for that at this present time when farmers are so much wanting the hay harvest it would be the means of taking some thousands of useful hands from their labours and would be greatly injurious to particular persons for many miles around Bristol. (FFBJ)

(Spoilsports!)

5th November

Samuel Evans, a Wick butcher was attacked by footpads on Lansdown who shot at him and robbed him of £20. The thieves had loaded their pistol with strange ammunition, part of a pewter spoon. The victim, lucky to survive, found the slug lodged in his breeches. (BG)

12th November

A dog nosing about in Kingswood dug up the decapitated corpse of a child aged about six weeks. "Wilful murder" said the jury. "The inhuman mother has made her escape" said the Gazette. (ibid)

26th December

"Friday last a man fell into a coalpit in Kingswood and was killed on the spot." (FFBJ)

1773

1st January

"Tuesday the wife of a poor man without Lawford's Gate went to an apothecary's to get some medicine for a child that was ill of the small pox and lock'd her three children in the house; the while one of them about 4 years of age getting too near the fire it caught its cloaths and by the time the mother returned was burnt in a shocking manner. It was taken to the Infirmary but died next day. This is the second misfortune of this kind which has befallen the family." (FFBJ)

18th April

Aaron Ithells of Mangotsfield was killed in a coalpit and buried at Siston. (PR)

September

Michael Short of the peppery disposition was in trouble again. This time he and Thomas Short were told to "fill up a dangerous hole they have dugg by the Common" by Christmas or be fined ten shillings each. This time Michael's comments are not recorded. (GRO/D108/M187/8)

11th November

Three sheep belonging to Joseph Cox and Thomas Sheerman, butchers of Bristol were killed and carried off. "The villains left the heads and skins on the spot, likewise a malt sack marked 'Gerrish, Hanham' and an old hat with a white metal button." (BG)

25th November

The inhumane dichotomy of the poor continued and the outparish of St Philip's followed Bitton and Mangotsfield in making it a condition of payment that "The Badge" should be worn on the outer garment. Thirteen poor law "payers" including Charles Arthurs, the Duke of Beaufort's Colliery Agent, appended their signatures to the public notice. (ibid)

27th November

A child of Samuel Jefferies of Hanham was burnt to death. (SFBJ)

2nd December

An open letter was addressed to the *Gazette* signed by "A Pauper" which is so literate that it is possible it is a disguised newspaper leader. The Pauper "a poor widower belonging to the out-parish, reduced to want and having, now living, five small children" cries out "As long as I could I did support them myself without being driven to the cruel necessity of becoming burthensome to the parish and when unable (some nine months since) to hold out longer I was obliged to apply for relief. This I have dealt out to me by a weekly allowance and by which I and my children are able still to exist. Many poor families would rather starve than wear the Badge.....the rich will say 'What have the poor to do with feeling soules?' Can their motive be that famine will be preferred? They have well-timed their scheme. Hunger and thirst with cold acting in conjunction will lessen us to their wishes....."

(The *Gazette* added, leaving no doubt as to its opinion, that from the list of names "the poor concerned will know whom to thank." (BG)

Thomas Gray in his famous "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard" supposes that:

*Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air
Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.*

Perhaps such a one lies buried in Mangotsfield Churchyard. Says his epitaph:

*Beneath this humble turf there lies
An honest collier, learned and wise.
His mind by love of knowledge fired
To wisdom more than wealth aspired
And thought it was a happy lot
To dwell with knowledge in a cot.*

The honest collier was William Llewelin, who worked in the coalmines of Kingswood all his days to for the support of himself and his family. Poor William was the proverbial square peg in a round hole and of all things the lot of the collier entombed in the dark dungeons of the Earth

must have been purgatory for him. For whilst his body toiled underground, his mind soared upwards amongst the stars and explored the mysteries of the Heavens. This self-tutored man read Newton, Halley, Kiel and other learned authors and frequently spent whole nights studying the Universe. "W.O." who wrote biographical notes about him which are contained in the Ellacombe Mss was impressed.

He told me he had laid out £30 in the purchase of books on science, which money he saved out of the labour of his hands in his younger days. He made an almanack. He ground glass to the greatest perfection and to any focus he required. He made refracting, reflecting and double-tubed telescopes and also microscopes of every kind.

William Llewelin died aged 86 on 2nd December 1773 and was buried three days later. "J.C." wrote for him his own elegy which includes the lines:

*He needs no more those aids he sought
Those artificial eyes he made
No clouds here intercept his view
No mist his prying eyes invade.*

The Llewelin family who originally must have come across the Bristol Channel from Wales had been in the parishes of Mangotsfield and Westerleigh for at least a century and seem to have been miners almost to a man. What did the family make of William? At best they must have understood him not at all; at worst they must have thought him mad. His quest after knowledge must surely have taken place in a vacuum, for with whom did he converse or share the ecstasy of his discoveries? Perhaps it was his spinster daughter who besides caring for him in his old age gave this comfort to his questing spirit? It was she who was granted the letters of administration of his estate, for absent-mindedly he died without making a will. His worldly goods in any case amounted to less than £20, a paltry sum, possibly realised by the sale of his books and telescopes of which no mention is made. If she had not joined in his passion, his daughter may have been glad to get shot of the lot as so much lumber. I hope this was not the case for William had believed in the education of girls; she signed her name to the intestacy papers - and he had bestowed upon her at birth the most appropriate name he could think of. Her name was Diana, the goddess of the Moon.

1774

The champions Milsom and Maggs were growing old and their title days were long gone. In 1774, a new star emerged, Benjamin Brain, born Bitton in 1756. Six feet four and weighing 16 stone, he was known to all as "Big Ben" (the clock was named after him!). A Kingswood coalminer, he won his first battle against his fellow collier, Bob Harris. He went on to defeat Clayton the Shropshire champion. He became Champion of England in 1791. He died suddenly in 1794 when in training for a fight against Will Wood. He was said to be a mild good-looking fellow who never let a day go by without his Bible.

26th February

Thomas Cole a waggoner from Marlborough was charged with stealing wheat from Farmer Ashley of Wick. SFBJ

5th March

"On Wednesday evening, one Tylee, a collier was killed near the new church by a waggon going over his body." ibid

8th April

Aaron Haskins killed in a coalpit and buried at Westerleigh. PR

11th April

Isaac Palmer killed in a coalpit and buried at Siston. PR

5th May

"Two petitions were sent up Wednesday night to our representatives in Parliament to be presented to the House of Commons praying that they will not let the Trustees of Bristol Turnpikes leave to make new road from near Stokes Croft Turnpike unto Stapleton Road and from thence into Bitton and Toghill roads. One petition is from the Corporation of the Poor in this City and the other signed by 400 inhabitants. FFBJ

4th June

"Tuesday a lad fell into a coalpit at Kingswood sixty fathoms deep. Contrary to expectations he was taken out alive but with his skull violently fractured. He was carried to our Infirmary and there are some hopes of his recovery." And on the same day "a poor man was run over by a loaded waggon at one of the coalpits in Kingswood. He died soon after he was brought to our Infirmary." (SFBJ, FFBJ)

7th October

A General Election began on this day and continued until 3rd November. A number of other colliers had joined Cyrus Cattle whose was the lone voice in 1754 and they cast their votes as follows:

John Avery coalminer	Bitton	1	Cruger	1	Burke	
Cyrus Cattle	"	"	1	Lord	Clare	
John Crouch	"	St George	1	Cruger	1	Burke
William Fudge	"	Bitton	1	Cruger	1	Burke
Stephen Guest	"	St George	1	Cruger	1	Burke
Isaac Herbert collier	Stapleton	1	Cruger	1	Burke	
Josiah Jones coalminer	Bitton	1	Cruger	1	Burke	
James Psalter	"	St George	1	Cruger	1	Burke
Thomas Taylor collier	"	"	1	Lord	Clare	

As can be seen the vast majority voted for the pair of acrimonious Whigs, the American Henry Cruger and the Irishman Edmund Burke who could scarcely agree about anything. Even those who threw in their lot with the Tories could not bring themselves to vote for Matthew Brickdale whose father John had been over enthusiastic in his pursuit of the colliers in the uprising of '53.

11th November

Information was laid to the Bitton overseers and a postscript was added to the minutes.

"NB. Abraham Brain have lived with Sarah Ithel and have a family that must be Bastds born as they was never married." (BPO)

1775

15th June

"Monday was married Henry Creswicke of Hanham Court, esquire to Miss Dickinson, the daughter of Vickris Dickinson, esquire, at Queen Charlton." (BG)

same day

"Last week as some colliers were at work in the pit at Kingswood, the damp suddenly arose and in drawing up the last person, a lad of about 16 years of age, the vapour affected him so that he missed his hold and fell into the pit and was killed on the spot." ibid

25th November

Charles Stone was killed in a coalpit and buried at Siston. PR

30th November

Elizabeth Stone, alias Betty Bush, John Cennick's thorn in the flesh, but now called "The Great Woman of Kingswood" was buried at Bitton. (PRB)

(The skirmishes between these two took place in 1741.)

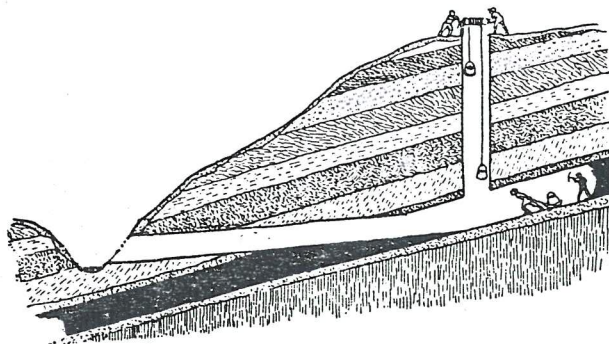
Dr Georgslenner, a physician and oculist arrived in Bristol from London and advertised frequently in the local press giving the names of satisfied customers. One who apparently benefited from his ministrations was twenty six year old Elizabeth Stephens, a resident of Pennywell Lane Workhouse, without Lawford's Gate, who had long been afflicted with scrofula of both eyes, and who was now pronounced "cured". (FFBJ)

Meanwhile, back at the diggings:

Daniel Chandler, Thomas Jefferis and John Pettygrove had dug "two deep holes or colepitts" on North Common Warmley, which were open and "very dangerous to the publick". The Oldland Court Leet ordered the guilty ones to fill them up by Christmas Day or be fined forty shillings (£2) each. (GRO)

.....and here, for the moment we leave them.

To be continued.....



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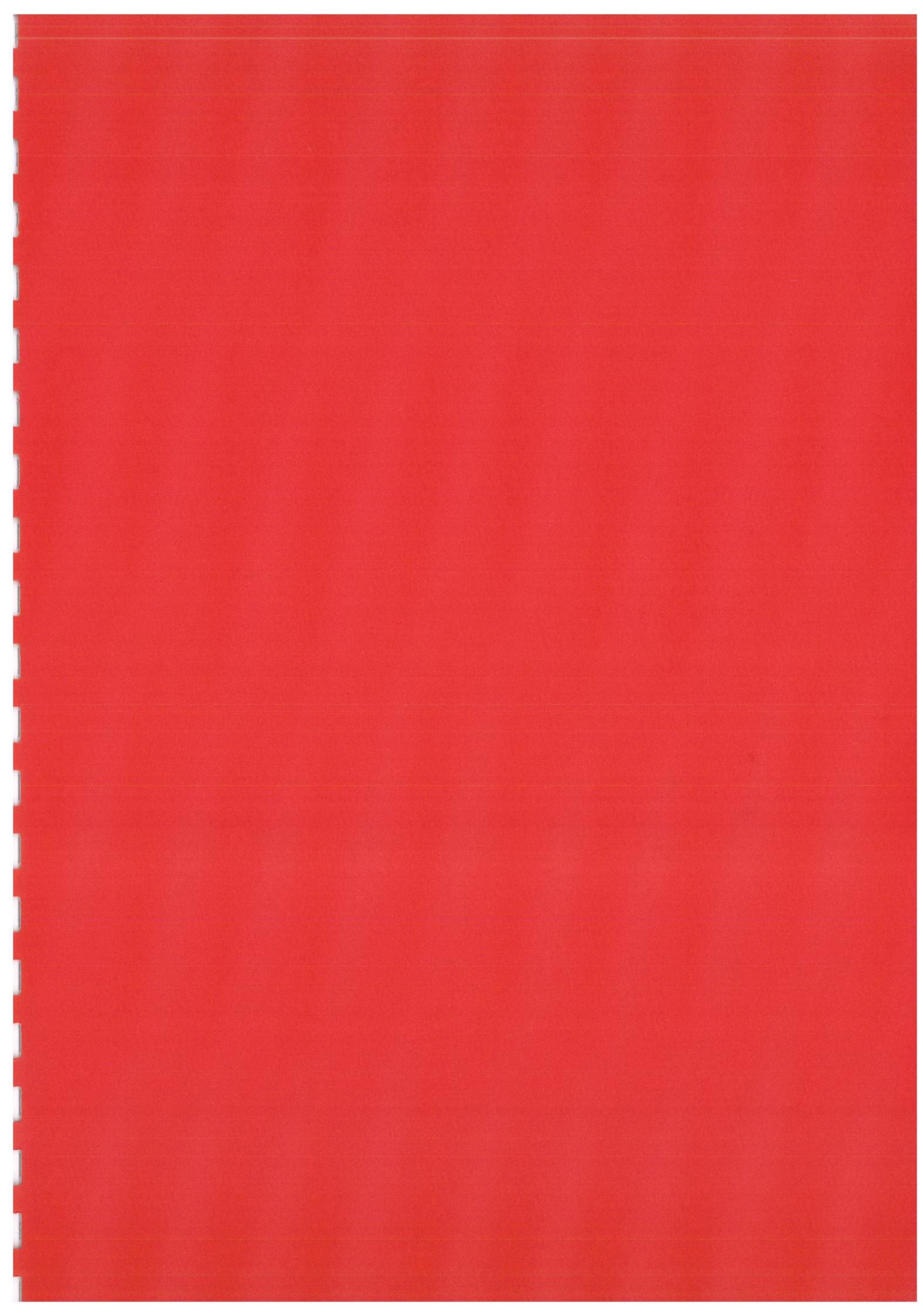
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BIBLIOGRAPHY/SOURCES/ABBREVIATIONS

ARL: Avon Reference Library
BaJ: Bath Journal (ARL)
BH: Bigland's History of Gloucestershire (ARL)
BO: Bristol Oracle (ARL)
BPO: Bitton Parish Orders (BRO)
BRO: Bristol Record Office
BUL: Bristol University Library
BVM: Bitton Vestry Minutes (BRO)
BWI: Bristol Weekly Intelligencer (ARL)
DNB: Dictionary of National Biography (ARL)
DPR: Doynton Parish Register (BRO)
EHB: Ellacombe's History of Bitton (BRO)
EMss: Ellacombe's Mss (ARL)
FFBJ: Felix Farley's Bristol Journal (ARL)
GRO: Gloucestershire Record Office
HBRI: History of the Bristol Royal Infirmary; R. Smith (ARL)
HKWF: History of Kingswood Forest; A. Braine (ARL)
KWI: Kingswood School in Wesley's Day & since; A. G. Ives, 1970. (ARL)
MV: Merchant Venturers
OPM: Our Parish, Mangotsfield; Emlyn-Jones (ARL)
PB: Parish of Bitton (BRO)
PRStPJ: Parish Register, St Philip & St Jacob (BRO)
PRWA: Parish Register, Wick & Abson (BRO)
PRW: Parish Register, Westerleigh (BRO)
QS: Quarter Sessions
SPR: Parish Register, Siston (BRO)

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City of New York
and County of the Same City

to-wit. Same City, of the prison
in the Guild: hall of the same City
Sovereign Lord George the Sec
and so forth before Morgan Sm
Justices of the Court of Kings Ben
and others their Associates Just

James Knight, Ann Gold
Ann Yaw, John M. Carthy
Amy White.

Ed Thom

Francis Mountain, Robert Holloway
William Young, Benjamin Crew
Nathaniel Crew, George Olds
John Daviour, William Jefferis
Abraham Pritchard, William Cottle
Dennis Doyd, James Roach

Philip Davis
Ann Brooks

Convinced at the last Court
and by that Court several
pleasure to extend his Ro
order them to be transported
the Town of Fourteen Ye
B. P. Thom