

lying in the PARISHES of
BITTON & MANGOTSFIELD
truly transcribed from M^r Player's
original PLAN Dated 1750.
By Daniel Cook, 1779.

*Reduced from the Original in the possession
of Mr Whittuck, Hanham Hall.*
H.T.E.

M^r. Players, Mⁿner
S^t. John Newton's ad-
each 3 Parts or Liberts
can be truly & properly
other also, as in the Pro-
tion The 1st Liberty Br-
contains 138 Acres, a hu-
Elm, The Adventurer, r-
are Samuel Slater &c.
The second Libert-
contains 268 Acres
led in the Adv-
at present are Isaac
Joshua Jefferys, Hil-
Willmot, John Bar-
Charles Jones, Cha-
Britton, and Arth-
Partners.
The third Liberty
Road, contains 41-
are Richard Bayle
These Liberties are
John Newton's by
set at convenient
St. John - Newton's
north of London
Acras hath 16 Coll-
of the Coal Mines
John Willis, a
second or Mid-
London Road,
40 Collages. The
Coal Mines are
The third Liber-
Hannum is 213
erected thereun
the Coal Mines
Isaac Cool with
M^r. Bond's Libe-
is about 70 Acs.
The Adventurer,
M^r. Bond, M^r. T-
Lord Stafford
Acres. These
the whole Co-
in the Col-
Note the
slav-

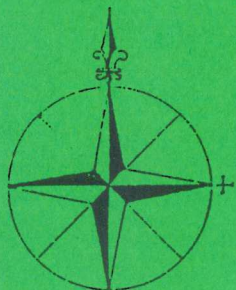
1797.

THE
ANNALS
OF
KINGSWOOD

Volume II

1776 - 1795

D.P.Lindegaard



MR. PLAYER'S
LIBERTY IN
Mellow
Green. PARIS
MANGOTS

S^r JOHN NEWTON'S First LIBERTY

M^r PLAYERS First LIBERTY

ST. JOHN
NEWTON'S
Second LIBERTY

Flash away.

Henry Hill

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THE
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OF
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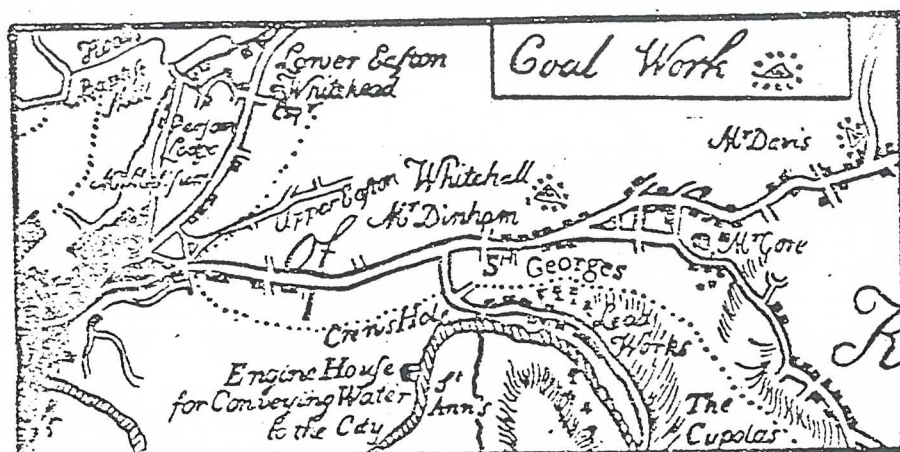
1776 - 1795

D.P. Lindegaard

They speak a broad dialect and improper language and are too much of a savage disposition still, tho' the Gospel spreads much among them and several of the colliers are local preachers."

Victory Purdy.

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WITHOUT LAWFORD'S GATE

being the Annals of Kingswood Forest for the years 1776 - 1795

This is the second in a series of Annals of Kingswood, which once again attempts to put flesh on to our ancestral bones while at the same time hoping to provide a general idea of life as lived in Kingswood, even by those who do not appear here by name.

These were the years of Revolution in America and France with England engaged in hostilities against both. War nerves rattled Kingswood in a seemingly seditious speech given at the Whitefield Schoolroom. Sailors used what remained of the forest as a hiding place from the press gangs and a polyglot of prisoners of war were held at Stapleton.

During these years the pioneer industrialist William Champion of Warmley died and James Emerson received a patent for his making of brass with copper and spelter. According to Bishop Watson in his *Chemical Essays* [quoted by John Evans in his "History of Bristol", 1816], "The Manufacturing of zinc was carried to the greatest perfection by Mr Emerson....the zinc is whiter and brighter than any other, either English or foreign and his brass is said to be more malleable, more beautiful and of a colour more resembling gold than ordinary brass." Emerson's "manufactory was at Hanham, on the banks of the Avon, about two miles from Bristol."

The bare knuckle boxing championship of England came to Kingswood through one of its sons, the otherwise gentle collier, Ben Brain, whilst John Gully and Tom Cribb were born and departed, also eventually to turn their fists to fortune.

The playwright, philanthropist and friend of the famous, Hannah More, [born Fishponds, February 2, 1745] was at the height of her remarkable career.

John Wesley died, though the world within a world of his Kingswood boarding school remained. His colliers' schools where both boys and girls were once taught may have existed alongside but if so, we know nothing of them. Likewise there are no records of Cennick's and Whitefield's schools. By 1786, Sunday Schools, in the wake of Robert Raikes of Gloucester and Sarah Trimmer of Brentford, provided limited education for some 200,000 pupils in England, and among them were St George children, who learned to read and [oddly] to spell but not, apparently, to write. Most of the establishment agreed with Hannah More who said of her school at Cheddar "I allow of no writing. My object has not been to teach dogmas and opinions but to form the lower class to habits of industry and virtue."

Within these years, several Kingswood people were murdered and a number hanged, at least one, possibly two, by mistake. There were suicides, accidents and visitations of God in the generally nasty, brutish, shortness of life.

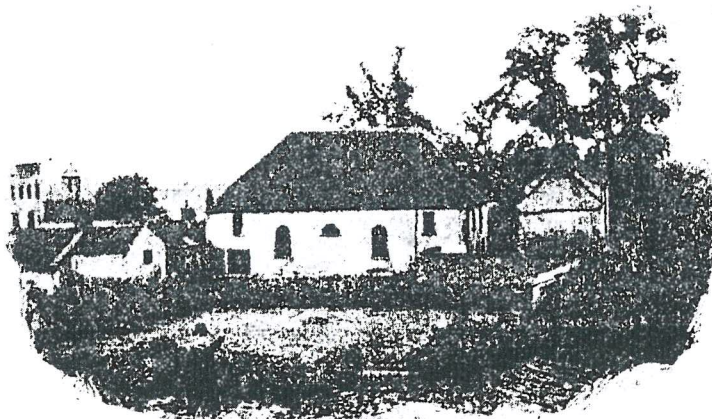
Insofar as much history is male history, I bid you spare a thought for the always maligned Mrs Wesley and the shadowy Mrs Victory Purdy, nee Mary Milsom; Mrs Simpson, [the spirited Bengal tiger of Kingswood School], finally forced to endure the privations of life as the wife of an itinerant preacher, the two Mrs Gullys and their 24 children; all those women who gave birth only to see their offspring killed in the pit and those women, some of whom appear in the text, driven to distraction and desperate solutions by unplanned pregnancy.

Victory Purdy, writing shortly after the end of our period, described Kingswood in a letter to his cousin Captain John Hurst:

"Kingswood was formerly a Forest or Chace a century ago. I suppose it was in many places impassable for they used to cut roads thro' the thickets to the coalpits, some parts of the old Forest I do very well remember but there is now very few vestiges remaining. It contained about 3,424 acres and stood in the four parishes, viz Stapleton, Mangotsfield, Bitton and St Philips. It is now almost all of it enclosed and contains a great many houses and gardens and orchards which are interspersed among cornfields and pasture lands. It is very populous, the chief business is coalmines. The mines in some places are very deep, one of the pits at our colliery is 294 yards deep in the perpendicular shaft and the coal is raised by a steam engine. The colliers were for many years the terror of Bristol, nor could the law of the Nation be properly enforced upon them, neither could strangers pass through the Forest with safety but it is now much civilised since the Gospel has been preached there and the law takes its course there as well. Strangers pass unmolested and the Citizens of Bristol are no longer in danger, for the Military, Horse and Foot, were some years ago sent out from Bristol to suppress an insurrection and the colliers have been tolerable quiet since and probably never will be so riotous any more. They speak a broad dialect and improper language and are too much of a savage disposition still, tho' the Gospel spreads much among them and several of the colliers are local preachers."

It is ofcourse not possible to discover or record every event which happened in a place in any given period. I draw no academic conclusions. I apologise to the Kingswood people of the past whose exploits remain hidden by the mists of time but thank those who have had no choice but to allow me to invade their lives. I make no apology at all for occasionally drifting outside Victory Purdy's four Forest parishes when I have spotted an incident which interested me. I please myself, and besides, I like lists.

D.P. Lindegaard, 1992.



OLD KINGSWOOD, FROM THE NORTH.

1776

Once again the winter was appallingly severe. Thick snow made the roads impassable and newspapers reported people lost in the drifts.

1st February

"Tuesday, four men were drowned in one of the coalpits in Kingswood by the water breaking suddenly in upon them. Three have left wives and children."
(BG)

15th February

The fund for the needy labouring poor outside Lawford's Gate was revived. The committee reported that some 2,000 persons residing in the outparish of St Philip and St Jacob's who received no parish relief whatsoever had been assisted. In order to help those who were in real want, committee members went from house to house giving bread and money. Donations received from benefactors were listed:

The Inhabitants of the Parish	£70. 0. 0d
The Chamber of the City of Bristol	31.10. 0d
The Society of Merchants	15. 0. 0d
William Bromley Chester, esq	31.10. 0d
The Hon. Mr Berkeley	31.10. 0d
Rev. Mr Roquet (part of the collection at St Nicholas Church)	5.15. 6d
	<hr/> £185. 5. 6d

The names Chester and Berkeley were among the original Lords of Kingswood. Rev. Mr Roquet was a former headmaster of John Wesley's Kingswood School. [see Annals of Kingswood 1750-1775]

Contributions were more generous than the collection which had been taken up in 1768 and four times as many people had been helped. The panel consisted of Edward Thrissell, churchwarden; Nath: Ogborn, James Jones, William Whittingham, James Moon, Theo: Haddock, Jacob Riddle and Samuel Jones. The following week, Bristol Gazette printed this verse in an attempt to shame those who had not subscribed.

*Cursed be the wretch who can behold
His chests o'erflow with hoarded gold
And will not rob his idle store
To feed or clothe the starving poor.*

29th April

The going rate for a horse load of coal was one shilling and a penny, or just under 5½p. This was the sum paid to Mary Frankham of Stapleton on this and other occasions. Sixty five years later, a Government report would refer to these "Amazons" the women coal-carriers of Kingswood, "rivalling the men in strength of sinew and vigour of lungs".

(PRecords, Stapleton; E. Waring, 1841)

30th May

A message or tenement at Oldland in the parish of Bitton, now in the tenure of John Cryer at the yearly rent of £30 was the first lot in a sale by auction to be held at the Exchange Coffee House, Corn Street, Bristol.

"The estate is very improveable, is quite compact and is in very good repair. Under it are several veins of coal which may be worked at small expense." (Advt.BG)

8th June

The assignment of the following lease may refer to the above property: Between parties (1) G. Shusle of Bristol, stationer, (2) Thomas Smith of Kingswood, Oldland, Bitton, coalminer & (3) Francis Waters of Bitton, in respect of a house and ground in Kingswood, Oldland, Bitton. (BRO 60987a)

6th October

"Yesterday sennight, a man very much in liquor, driving a cart through Kingswood, it overset on him and killed him on the spot." (FFBJ)

25th October

Whereas Messrs Smith and Waters could lawfully sink for coal on their leasehold estate, others still took a chance on the common grounds or wastes. [See Annals of Kingswood 1750-75, *passim*]. The Oldland Court Leet in session ordered Thomas Summers [North Common] and Jacob Player [Oldland Common] to fill up the coalpits they had dug. John Pearsall was to do the same with his dangerous clay pits. If this had not been done by Christmas Day then Summers and Pearsall were to pay forty shillings each and Player £5. (GRO, D108. M187.8)

12th December

"On Thursday the Press Gang entered the Iron Foundry at Cheese Lane, St Philips and seiz'd one of the men on whom information had been laid" [perhaps an experienced merchant man or even Royal Navy deserter] "when a battle commenced between the gang and the workmen who arm'd themselves with red hot bars of iron, spits, clubs &c with which they oblig'd their antagonists to fly precipitately dreading the consequences of such uncommon weapons." It seems however, the Press Gang did not let go of their captive. (BG)

14th December

"Yesterday sennight* died at Wick in Gloucestershire, far advanced in years, Thomas Haynes, esquire, a man who justly merited the attention and praise of the public as well as the love and admiration of his many private friends. In short, in the character of husband, parent, master, neighbour, gentleman and magistrate it would be difficult to find his superior." (FFBJ)

[See also "Annals of Kingswood, 1750-1775": 1752]

*sennight = seven nights = one week.

21st December

"On Wednesday last, Mr Hathway of Pucklechurch was going out with his harriers when they accidentally took the scent of a fox. After leading his pursuers two rings he took to the hills and ran first to Sir William Codrington's woods at Doddington, then to the Duke of Beaufort's woods at Didmarton, thence to Upton Kilcott and was at last killed between Kilcott

and Frocester. Out of seventeen couple of dogs, only six couple were in at the death. They ran near 50 miles and the fox was the largest ever seen in these parts." (FFBJ)

[This must be the origin of the expression "To run rings around", though the quick brown fox was unsuccessful on this occasion.]

1777

20th February

The right to vote was jealously guarded and there were complicated rules to decide enfranchisement. Certain local men who had polled in the recent election had their votes nullified by the Gloucestershire election committee:

Thomas Marsh: Westerleigh; in respect of a house in Frampton Cotterell; not rated
Charles Coole: Hanham; land in tenure of William Coole; not rated
John Whittuck: Hanham; land in tenure of Charles Whittuck; not rated
Hugh Stratten: St Philip & St Jacob; land in own tenure; not rated
William Gully: Oldland; land in own tenure; no freehold
John Hudson: Bitton; land in tenure of Samuel Harding; no freehold
Thomas Hendy: Bitton; land in Siston in the tenure of Joseph Palmer; no freehold. (BG)

8th March

"...died Samuel Webb, esquire, of Beach Farm in Bitton, late of the Corporate Body of the City of Bristol, within the compass of three days from the death of his wife; an honest man and a useful citizen. The frequent infirmities of his body and consequential avocations of mind subjected him to immeasurable calamity not unknown in the mercantile world. The latter years of his life [from a principle of being serviceable to mankind in general and the Navy in particular to which he was bred] he employed in the arduous task of finding the longitude, an undertaking to which he approved himself not unequal. He died with the pleasing consciousness that his generous creditors would not be involved in the misfortune which fell on himself alone". Below is the obituary of his wife Ann aged 73, who he barely survived, "a truly just, amiable and good woman; honoured and respected in life and very sincerely lamented.." (BG, 20.3.1777)

Ann was formerly Miss Weare, descended from the Weares of Dyrham, from whom were drawn council members, Merchant Venturers and a Mayor of Bristol. Samuel, himself a former Sheriff of Bristol, became bankrupt. Beach Farm was heavily mortgaged to Samuel Peach, a wealthy merchant and father in law to Bristol's Whig M.P., the New Yorker, Henry Cruger. The unravelling of Samuel's affairs was still being attempted on New Year's Eve 1785 when creditors were summoned to a meeting in the Rummer Tavern in Bristol. Ann Webb's will is fiercely protective of her husband, who had evidently withdrawn from business affairs into an arcane world of his own.

19th March

Hester, the wife of Charles Arthur[s] of Kingswood Lodge was buried at Marshfield in her 60th year. Her obituary was printed in the Bristol Gazette of 20th March: her "many virtues rendered her a blessing to her relations and friends."
(PR Marshfield; BG)

20th April

An "incendiary" letter was sent from Kingswood, supposedly from the colliers voicing their displeasure and threatening the excise men:

"Sir, you may tell Lilytrap, Lovelas, Martin and Umferies that if they have a mind to save their lives, they do remove from Bristol and Dam me if we dont put an end to them. Umferies and Marsh narrowly missed it the other day. And Elton and Barry, you had best alter your proceedings in encouraging those villains otherwise your house will be made a Dunghill of and your Carcises sent to the Devil for a firebrand. Advise Elton and Barry to sign no more warrants. We are fifty of us ready to put this our Desine in Execution. P.S. Don't let Mr Lion stand in the pillory."

Exhaustive enquiries had been made as to the authorship, but Kingswood stood firm. In desperation, the King's Majesty, in the London Gazette offered a free pardon to "any accomplice" who would reveal the identity of the writer.
(FFBJ, 9.8.1777).

[Without knowing the story behind it, the note is incomprehensible. Lovelas (Lovelace?) & Umferies (Humphreys) and the others must have been excise men. Isaac Elton was certainly an alderman and Barry was obviously another official. But who was Mr Lion? And why should he stand in the pillory? Lion (Lyon) is not a local name....could he have been symbolic, Lion = England?]

26th June

The unrest continued and the colliers attempted to go on strike. Bristol's conservative Felix Farley's Journal was scathing.

"We hear from Kingswood that on Monday last, the pitmen or underground colliers having assembled in a larger body refused to work unless they were allowed extra pay for their labour which they say has lately been increased to so great a degree they are unable to support their numerous families without some addition to their wages or the quantum of their work reduced to its former standard. They have since returned to their employment and we presume they had NO reason to tell their masters

You grind the face of the poor and tell us to make bricks without straw, or which is the same thing impose on us burthens greater than we can bear."

10th July

The body of a well dressed man, who had been dead some time was taken from the river at Crew's Hole.
(BG)

24th July

From Andover, news of the death of a remarkable man, Anthony Purver, a Quaker, many years a teacher at Frenchay, who

"without tutor or patron, by dint of hard labour as a schoolmaster, purchased and perused most of the authors in the Oriental languages [of which] his knowledge was very extensive as appears by his translation of the Old and New Testaments which he published some years ago in two volumes." (BG)

1st October

Samuel Creswicke, brother of Henry Creswicke, Lord of the Manor of Hanham Abbots, granted William Webber a lease to dig coal at Bitton for 21 years. (BRO 206/14k)

27th November

The death was announced of perhaps the most important member of the current Kingswood establishment: Charles Bragge, esquire, of Cleeve Hill. Justice of the Peace, Deputy Lieutenant of Gloucestershire and Major of the 4th Battalion of the Gloucester Militia.... "a judicious and upright magistrate and a gentleman of excellent character". (BG)

Kingswood's holes continued to be dug, causing more and more nuisance. William Palmer was a little speculator by any standards. The pit he excavated on waste ground was a subject at the Court Leet and he was told to fill it by Christmas Day or be fined two shillings [10p].

(GRO, D108 M187.8)

1778

3rd January

"Saturday sennight, about 9 o'clock as Mr Charles Wilcox, late clerk to Messrs Reeve, Son & Hill was going to his lodging at Two Mile Hill, he unfortunately fell into a coalpit forty fathoms deep but happily for him, he lodged in what is called the binns about five or six fathoms down where he lay till next morning when he was discovered, taken out and carried to his lodgings seriously bruised." (FFBJ)

21st March

"Sunday night or Monday morning, the house of Joseph Holder who keeps the Red Bull at Coalpit Heath, parish of Westerleigh was broken open and robbed of £11 in cash, a silver pap spoon, two teaspoons, a pair of tea tongs and other goods which they got off undetected." (FFBJ)

25th April

"Monday died Mr Cary, master of the Poor House, without Lawford's Gate." (FFBJ)

same day

"To be sold by private contract before 12th May or if not by Auction at the Black Swan, outparish of St Philip & St Jacob: a tenement or dwelling house with a very large new built stable and a piece of ground thereto belonging situate in the Forest or Chase of Kingswood within the parish of Stapleton, late in the possession of Thomas Fussell.

"These premises stand in a very healthy and pleasant position, command an extensive prospect and have a right of common upon the said Chase and are now held for the remainder of a term of [blank] years determinate with three healthy young lives under a yearly rent of 7/6d. [Also to be sold, one share in the Bristol Crown Fire Office]."

(Advt, ibid)

6th August

"Saturday morning as a young man belonging to the coalworks at Soundwell was going to work, a rope with which he was let down broke and his brains were dashed out. It was immediately discovered that a man had cut the rope almost through from a grudge to another person in the work but the above person being the first occasion to use it, he unfortunately met with the untimely end designed for another. The charge not being positive against the offender, he was sent on board a Man of War".

(BG)

22nd August

"Wednesday evening, a collier riding in his cart near College Green, the horses took fright and ran away which he hastily jumping out in order to stop them, unfortunately fell down and the wheels of the cart going over his body he was bruised in so terrible a manner that he died yesterday in our infirmary."

26th September

"Thursday died at Hanham, Mr Samuel Creswicke, brother to Henry Creswicke, esquire, one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for Gloucestershire."

(BG)

17th November

Samuel Fluke was killed in a coalpit and buried at Westerleigh.

(PRW)

29th November

Robert Brown was killed in a coalpit and buried at Siston.

(PRS)

1779

21st January

William Williams was killed in a coalpit and buried at Westerleigh.

(PRW)

23th January,

"On Tuesday was married at St James's church, Bristol, the Reverend Mr Elwys, vicar of Bitton to Miss Creswicke of Hanham, sister of Henry Creswicke, esquire".

(FFBJ)

10th March

Although steam engines had been used in mining for a number of years, their manufacturers were unable to devise any method of producing a circular motion in machinery except by pumping water on the floats of a water wheel. On this date, a patent was granted to Matthew Wasborough, a brass founder of Narrow Wine Street, Bristol, for converting a reciprocal into a rotary motion by a combination of wheels and pulleys. The government ordered one of his engines to grind flour at Deptford but later cancelled in favour of a water wheel. The disappointment was said to have been

responsible for Wasborough's early death on 21st October 1781 aged only 28. In August 1780, a man called Pickard adapted Wasborough's design, adding a crank and through his ingenuity the steam engine, hitherto only used for pumping, became capable of employment "in a hundred different ways". (LA) [not least in the coalworks.]

24th April

"At Pucklechurch Mr Thomas Evans and Mr Daniel Strange of Syston [were married] to Miss Margaret and Miss Mary Hollways of Pucklechurch, two agreeable young ladies with every compliment to render the marriage state happy." (FFBJ)

3rd July

"Tuesday night a melancholy accident happened to a woman in Kingswood. She had been in Bristol that day when she heard that a party of soldiers were to visit Kingswood to secure the sailors concealed there. On her return home, happening to meet with one of them, she communicated her intelligence, to which he replied he was arm'd and did not care for them. He then drew out of his pocket a brace of pistols when unfortunately one went off and lodged in that part from whence it has not yet been extracted. She lies without hope of recovery." (FFBJ)

[So once again the Press Gang sought experienced men for the grim ships of the Royal Navy. The fact that this sailor was walking about freely in Kingswood demonstrates just how far it provided a haven for those on the run. The fate of both woman and mariner is unknown].

17th July

Mary Cole, a native of Winterbourne absconded from her master, William Dikes, a staymaker, of St James, Bristol who offered half a guinea reward to anyone who would return her to his service. She was described "a stout, fresh faced young woman, aged 19 years, with sandy hair and wearing a black bombazine gown which is too short and too small for her, a greenish petticoat and a black silk hat". (BMBJ)

[She had probably been a parish apprentice, an orphan girl of 13 or so, sent into Mr Dikes' service to learn "the art and mystery of housewifery", in other words as an unpaid skivvy, until 21 or married. Girls were rarely apprenticed other than as "housewives".]

12th August

John Stone was killed in a coalpit and buried at Siston. (PRS)

14th August

Catherine Jenkins of St Philip and St Jacob was tried for the murder of her niece, Ann Jenkins, a child not yet three. She was found guilty at the Gloucestershire Assizes and sentenced to death. By the time the newspaper report appeared, she had already been executed. (FFBJ)

28th August

England was at war; not only against rebel America but engaged also against France and Spain. A sermon preached in Kingswood caused something of a furore.

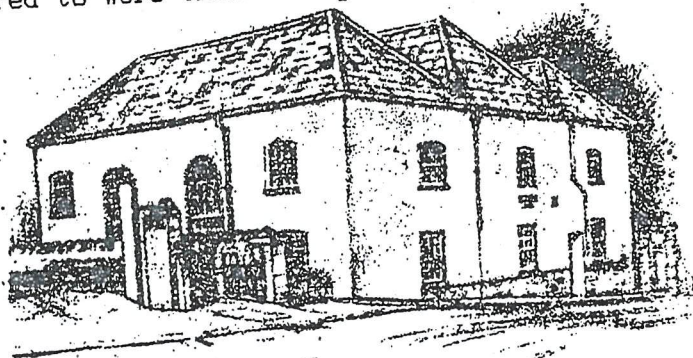
Felix Farley's Journal puffed: "It is the request of many persons who heard Mr P--n preach last Sunday morning at Mr Whitefield's room in Kingswood that he would answer direct the following questions. viz:

1. Whether it be consistent with the character of a man who professes to be a minister of the Gospel of Peace to stir up his hearers to sedition against the state?
2. Whether it has not a direct tendency to stir them up to such sedition to affirm in a public sermon that it is impossible our arms would prosper against the French and Spaniards until this present cursed administration is turned out?
3. Whether such a declaration has the least connection with the Gospel? And by consequence
4. Whether it was not purposely thrown out to an ignorant multitude with a wicked design?"

3rd September

But it was all a mistake. So they said. The minister had not meant to stir the "ignorant multitude" - the colliers of Kingswood who were still greatly feared - into revolution, though it is true there was a certain amount of sympathy for the American rebels in Bristol*, invasion from Europe was a different matter.

An apologist writing under the pseudonym "Truth" explained: "The young man that preached is a stranger to our disputes. He prayed very fervently for the preservation of his king and country in the present hour of danger and alarm and in the course of his sermon which was 'Sir. We would see Jesus' he mentioned the fears [of] a French and Spanish invasion and that we could expect little mercy should they prevail - this led him to speak of the faith...that purifies the heart and not that faith which is without works....the ministers that possess such doctrines are cursed ministers....the word administration was never mentioned. The only ministers referred to were those who preached faith without works. (FFBJ)



--- GEORGE WHITEFIELD ROOM KINGSWOOD 1741 ---

* See Caroline M. Lindegaard, *Sympathisers and Loyalists: Bristolians during the American Revolutionary War*, Unpublished BSc [Econ] dissertation, 1991, Aberystwyth, [I have a feeling the young preacher, "a stranger to our political disputes", Mr P--n (Penn?) may have been an American, though a somewhat shaky Loyalist. Both Whitefield and Wesley had strong American connections.]

2nd October

"Tuesday afternoon died at the Fishponds near this City, Dr Joseph Mason, universally esteemed for his uncommon benevolence. The house over which he presided will be continued by his daughters who have long been used to his methods of treating his patients and for many years past have had the principal direction of the business." (FFBJ)

[Dr Mason kept the Lunatic Asylum.]

16th October

The Stapleton Enclosure Act. This Act authorised the enclosure of that part of Kingswood situated within the parish of Stapleton: that is the modern parish of Fishponds. The locality of the New Pools, so named in the Kingswood map of 1610 was inhabited chiefly by colliers and quarrymen living in cottages they had built themselves. The landowners, with a liberality unusual at that time allotted half an acre of land to each of these "squatters" who were thus encouraged to convert their huts into comfortable stone dwellings. Nevertheless, pieces of this "common" land were divided into lots and advertised for auction to take place on Monday 20th day of December:

The following is a précis:

1. Piece of common waste ground containing 4 acres, 3 roods, 17 perches bounded in the north by an old inclosure called Long Walls, east by part of the commons, south by the Turnpike Road from New Pools, otherwise Fishponds to Mangotsfield and on the west by an intended private road in front of the late Dr Joseph Mason's house.
2. 10 acres, 3 roods, 16 perches of common or waste, near to above, an intended private road through Lodge Causeway and an orchard belonging to Mr Zephaniah Fry.
3. 7 acres etc. adjoining Lot 2.
4. 2 Roods and 24 perches of Common bounded on the north by an old inclosed garden belonging to Dr Joseph Mason with a new intended road leading to several cottages.
5. 9 Acres, 1 rood and 22 perches bounded in the north by the Turnpike Road leading from the sign of the Queen's Head to New Pools and by some old inclosures in possession of James Bradey, the east by part of the common, the south by road to Lodge Causeway and old inclosures belonging to Edward Walter and James Williams. On the West by Lot no 6 and a garden belonging to James Bradey.
6. 8 acres, 1 rood, 4 perches bounded north by the Turnpike Road, East by part of the common and old inclosures belonging to the Duchess Dowager of Beaufort in the possession of Joseph Burgess and joining lots 5 and 7.
7. 6 acres, 1 rood, 32 perches adjoining Lots 6 and 8.
8. 5 acres, 36 perches adjoining Lot 7
9. 5 acres, 15 perches of common bounded in the south by old inclosures in possession of George Tyler.

The number of each lot is cut out on the turf. Nos 5,6,7,8,9 are exceeding rich Land, very eligible for building and adjoin the Turnpike Road; and the Lady or Lord of the Manor not having any power to enter into any orchard, garden, yard or barton that does not exceed one acre for the purpose of mining, quarrying and paying rent for all other parts that shall be made use of and filling up all pits and quars in manner as in the said Inclosure Act.....

Further details from Mr John Player of Stoke Gifford or Mr James Bridges, Attorney, at the Fish-Ponds wherein a map of the wastes may be seen with the several allotments delineated thereon. (FFBJ Oct-Nov, 1779)

4th November

George Gay was killed in a coalpit and buried at Siston. (PRS)

13th December

Levi Hollister was killed in a coalpit and buried at Westerleigh. (PRW)

1780

22nd January

"Monday was married Charles Whittuck, esquire of Hanham to Miss Roach of this City." (FFBJ)

29th January

"Sunday was married at St James, Mr Joseph Wright, accomptant of Bitton to Miss Mary Bassett of St James." (FFBJ)

11th March

"Sunday was married at St Ewen's Church, Mr Richard Henderson of Hanham to Mrs Doyle, haberdasher of Broad Street and widow of the late Captain Doyle of this City." (FFBJ)

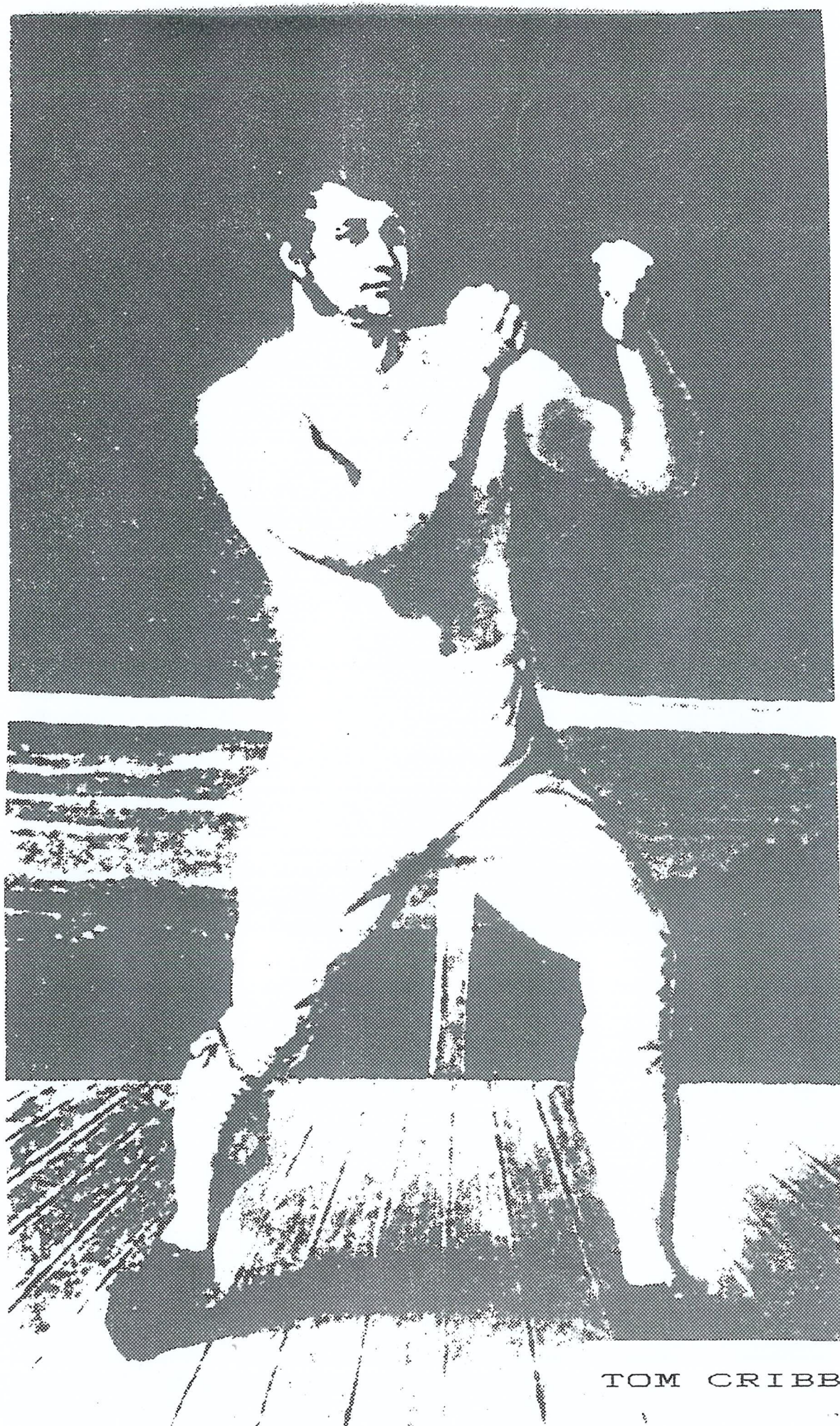
17th June

"Married at St James, Mr Samuel Simmons Windle of Mangotsfield to Miss Elizabeth Dobbins of St James." (FFBJ)

24th June

"One John Abbott, a wheelwright of Hanham for some time has been disordered in his senses and the first objects of his bloody rage were his wife and a female acquaintance both of whom he treated in so horrible a manner that the latter is said to have died of her wounds and his wife's life is despaired of. He then sallied forth from his own habitation armed with a hatchet when unfortunately two innocent children returning from school fell sacrifice to his barbarity. He cleaved the head of the first asunder and gave the other such a blow as to cause instant death. This inhuman wretch was overpower'd after much resistance by some persons who were distant spectators and last night he was lodged in Lawford's Gate Bridewell." (FFBJ)

[Hanham people were almost always buried in the churchyard at Bitton, thus Lydia Abbott buried there on 27th June. There were only five other



TOM CRIBB

interments that month: Elizabeth Cribb, on the 14th, Hannah Stone, the 15th, Hannah Lear, the 18th, Sarah Bright and Martha Hulbert, both on the 25th. The burial register rarely gives extra details, other than name and date. It is impossible to tell which of these, if any, are the other three victims.]

1st July

John Abbott was committed to Gloucester gaol for quadruple murder. "At particular periods for years he has discovered evident symptoms of insanity but has of late been so well as to be capable of working at his business and was even employed in that manner the day before." (FFBJ)

[I have been unable to discover Abbott's ultimate fate.]

7th October

"Sunday died near the New Church, Kingswood, Mrs Snell, wife of Mr Snell who some time kept the Greyhound in Broadmead and daughter of the late Mr Dymock. (FFBJ)

16th December

"Died at Frenchay, Captain John Reed, a man no less esteemed for his loyalty than his intrepidity of which he gave eminent proof in the two preceding wars with the French and the Spanish when he commanded several private ships of war out of this port." (FFBJ)

By now the firms of Messrs Gregory of Kingswood and Messrs Hill & Phipps of Soundwell were specialising in the production of pumps and steam winders for the coalfield. (N538, Redland College Library)

1781

9th February

John Trembling, junior was killed by falling down a coalpit. He was buried at Westerleigh. (PRW)

17th March

"Last Saturday morning the body of Edward Williams was taken out of the river near Crew's Hole. In his pockets were found his discharge from a Man of War and his copy of the Freedom of Bristol in a tin box with 14s 9¹/₂d in cash. He came from London to vote for Mr Daubeney at the late election, went out in the morning [about three weeks since] for that purpose and has been missing since." (FFBJ)

30th March

John Read, alias Jack Toby and John Ward, otherwise Jack Dagger, described "colliers, part of a desperate gang that has long infested the country" were executed at Gloucester for breaking into the house of Mr William Jones of the Queens Head, at Willsbridge and stealing a silver tankard and a surtout. Their remains were brought back to Kingswood by their friends and buried at Bitton on the 1st April.

(Ellacombe Mss; BMBJ 17.3.1781; FFBJ 7.4.1781;
I. Wyatt "The Cock Road Gang"; PRB

April

Formerly, prisoners of war had been kept in Bristol in the old prison at Knowle. From 1779 they were housed in a purpose built gaol at Stapleton. In April 1781, five hundred Spaniards from captured enemy ships arrived and were followed shortly afterwards by 300 Dutchmen who brought with them such an array of gear, including bedding and 123 sea chests that the Admiralty thereafter restricted luggage to a measly 20 lbs per man.

(D. Vinter. "Prisoners of War in Stapleton")

26th May

James Baker, the driver of the common stage between Bristol and Bath was caught in the act by two justices who were just about to partake of refreshment at the Crown Inn, Hanham "riding in the shafts of a waggon without having any person opposite the horse". They dished out summary justice by fining him ten shillings on the spot.

(FFBJ)

2nd July

Thomas Cribb was baptised at St Philip & St Jacob's on this date, the fourth of ten children of Thomas and Hannah [nee Rogers] Cribb of St George. Aged 13, he moved to London where he was apprenticed to a bell hanger. He left this employ to become a coal porter at the wharves of Wapping where he gained a nickname, "The Black Diamond". After service in the Royal Navy he became a professional prize fighter, losing only once in a career spanning 1805-1820. He stood 5 ft 10 inches, weighed 198 lbs and is generally believed to have become the first international champion when he beat Tom Molineaux, a black American, in 1810. He retired to keep a pub, the Union Arms off the Haymarket, later renamed The Tom Cribb. He was a guard of honour at the coronation of George IV in 1821. He died at Woolwich on 11th May, 1848. He was elected to boxing's Hall of Fame in 1954.

His epitaph contains the following lines:

"As a professor of his art he was matchless and as a demonstrator of fair play.....he was never excelled. He had still a higher virtue displayed throughout his gallant career, independent of indomitable courage - a reputation for unimpeachable integrity and unquestionable humanity. His hand was ever open to the distresses of his fellow creatures.....and by relieving them exhibited the charitable and kindly impulses of a truly benevolent heart".

(S.J. Cribb: "Thomas Cribb, 1781-1848". BAFHS Journal, no39)

7th July

Occasionally the seamen who eluded the press gangs by hiding in the woods were forced to break cover:

"Last night, a body of sailors out of Kingswood paraded to the great terror of the inhabitants [of Bristol] and committed several outrages, particularly at a public house opposite the drawbridge, the rendez-vous of the press gang, which they broke open and destroyed all the windows at the front, carried off the colours and rescued a sailor that was impressed therein."

In the pub "a more numerous body of the Worcestershire Militia" who had old scores to settle with the press gang joined in enthusiastically on behalf of the sailors.

(FFBJ)

21st July

Industrial news: "On Tuesday a grant passed the Great Seal to Mr James Emerson of Bitton for his new invented art of making brass with copper and spelter."
(FFBJ)

6th October

"Mr Parry of Castle Street was robbed between the three and four mile stones beyond Stapleton. The highwayman behaved very civil and afterwards rode off towards Frenchay. He was a thin man of a sallow complexion with dark curled hair and rode a dark brown nag's tail'd horse about 16 hands high with a black mane and tail and no mark on the face."
(FFBJ)

10th November

....died "Mr Thomas Sweet who kept The Nag's Head beyond the New Church on the Bath Road."
(FFBJ)

29th December

"Tuesday, a sailor who had intended to spend his Christmas with some women of easy virtue without Lawford's Gate, but a dispute arising in the evening, the enraged ladies, to get rid of their guest agreed to throw him out of the window, which they immediately put into practice. He was taken up by some humane persons, having received considerable injury in the fall."
(FFBJ)

1782

In this year, Thomas Palmer of Kingswood became engine minder of the world's first compound steam engine at Radstock, Somerset.

(BIAS, 13, 1981, p11.)

John Armitstead, a relative of the Burchill family and well known as a coal adventurer - a colliery proprietor - had a pit between Church Road and Whitehall Road, St George where he installed a pumping engine for raising coal. Power was generated from water by means of a fire and ergo the device was called a Fire-engine. It stood on Colt's or Boulter's Ground but the land came to be known as the Engine Ground. To this day, a pub in the area is called the Fire Engine. (W.Sanigar. People & Buildings, St George).

31st January

There was a vicious fatal attack on a Mangotsfield householder. The hue and cry was raised.

MURDER

"Whereas in the night of Thursday, 31st January last, the house of William Millard of the parish of Mangotsfield in the county of Gloucester, labourer, was broken open by forcing the kitchen window and early the next morning was found lying in his bed murdered in a most shocking manner, there appearing on him several mortal wounds, three on his face, one on his right eyebrow, another on his left cheek bone [the intervening space

inflated and broken inl and the other on his lower lip, which appeared to have been made by a mattock or such like instrument used in the coalpit."

Other injuries were found on the body: "a wound on his left breast, broken ribs and collar bone supposed caused by the butt end of a mattock."

A man called Stallard was suspected: "a thin faced man, 5 feet 9 inches tall, a pale sallow complexion and short straight black hair and wearing a flapped hat and a light coloured coat that appears to have been turned, having offered for sale to a broker in Bristol a pair of old leather breeches and a white flannel jacket, the property of the deceased."

"Whoever will apprehend the above Stallard [or any person to be convicted of the murder] shall receive a reward of 10 guineas.

"Apply Edward Nicholls, overseer of the parish of Mangotsfield."

Poor Mr Millard was buried at Mangotsfield on the 5th February. Thomas Stallard was apprehended at Points Pool, now in St Judes, but then in the outparish of St Philip's and taken to Gloucester Gaol for trial at the next assizes. (BMBJ 9.2./16.2.1782;PRM)

1st March

Victory Purdy, variously described "The Kingswood Collier" or "The Walking Bible" recorded in his diary: "This day, my young master C.A. [Charles Arthur, the Duke of Beaufort's agent at his Kingswood coalworks] gave me an article of wearing apparel which I wanted very bad, for my own was so ordinary that I was ashamed to go out to preach, neither had I any money to buy any. I look upon this as a remarkable instance of divine goodness; the Lord knew what I wanted and I had several times been begging of him to send me help; accordingly, he granted my request in an unexpected time by an unexpected hand.....Glory be to God." (Life of Victory Purdy)

9th March

The felon Stallard could expect no help at all. At Gloucester Castle, he began to talk. He freely admitted being at Mangotsfield and on Millard's premises where he helped break open the window. The robbery and murder though, he insisted, were committed by a man called John Taylor who entered the house by himself. Shortly afterwards Stallard, waiting outside, heard a terrible cry and the words "The Lord have mercy on my soul" which so terrified him, he ran into the garden and remained there until Taylor came out. [FFBJ]

23rd March

Meanwhile, over at Stapleton prison, only thirteen of the Dutchmen remained, the others having been released, but there were still 774 Spaniards. It was said that one who "insulted a sentinel was reprov'd for it which instead of having the proper effect, the prisoner had recourse to throwing stones." The soldier warned him of the consequences but the man proved "refractory", so the sentry "levelled his piece and shot him dead". Another, Manuel Asalde tunnelled his way to freedom and remained at large three months. A third, Manuel Sceberia made an apparently successful break for he was never heard of again. (FFBJ.DV)

6th April

Stallard was found guilty of the murder of William Millard and sentenced to death. A brief newspaper note says "he suffered agreeable to his sentence." Of the mysterious John Taylor there is no mention and it must have been presumed that he did not exist, but as we shall find later, miscarriages of justice were not unknown. (BMBJ)

22nd June

"Thursday died Farmer Mitchell, the oldest inhabitant of the outparish of St Philip & St Jacob." (FFBJ)

23rd June

Jacob Tovey, also known as Dandy, was killed in a coalpit and buried at Westerleigh. (PRW)

6th July

"Saturday, as two men were mowing some grass in a field at Wick Farm, Bitton, having some words together, one of them took his scythe and struck the point of it in the other's belly upon which his bowels gushed out and he died soon after. The man is committed to Gloucester Gaol to take his trial at the next assizes." (FFBJ)

25 August

A young gentleman called Adam Clarke came to Kingswood School on this day and left the following unflattering account of Mr & Mrs Thomas Simpson the headmaster and his wife.

Adam left Birmingham for Bristol by coach, [riding outside, where he was wet to the skin] at 3 a.m on August 24th. He was armed with a penny loaf, a ha' pennyworth of apples, 7½d and a letter of introduction from John Wesley. He arrived at the Lamb Inn, Broadmead 8 o'clock that night and sixpence of his small store of cash went on his lodgings. The next day, he rose early and walked to Kingswood, arriving at 7 a.m just as preaching was about to begin. After prayers, Adam saw Mr Simpson and I suspect things got off on the wrong foot, for Mr Simpson had never heard of him and said there was no room in the school for anyone. Not one spare bed in the house; the young man must go back to Bristol and wait for Mr Wesley there. "Why should you come to Kingswood?" he puzzled. "It is only for preachers' children or for preachers who cannot read their Bible." But Adam had no money and was eventually reluctantly found a room at the end of the chapel. He was confined there and not allowed into the house. His apartment consisted of "a wretched old wainscot bureau bedstead and a flock bed" where, in unseasonably cold and wet weather he shivered under scanty bedclothes. A rush bottomed chair completed the furnishings, "no carpet on the floor, nor at the bedside, nor any other kind of furniture. There was no book, not even a Bible."

Adam's effects had been left at the Lamb and he had not even a change of linen. In vain he begged that a man who went into Bristol three times a week with a horse and small cart should be allowed to fetch his box for him. At last, he found out why he was "cooped up in my prison house" - they thought he had The Itch as many people from the country were infected. This he thought was a bit rich, "coming from Scotch people, as they both were", unfortunately succumbing to racism. Tearing open his waistcoat and shirt

and showing Mr Simpson "a skin as white and as clean as ever he had come across by the Tweed", he was he was nevertheless obliged to anoint himself from head to toe "in the infernal unguent", Jackson's ointment, before a large fire in his room "the first and last I saw while I remained there".

"Smelling like a polecat, I tumbled with heavy heart and streaming eyes into my worthless bed."

A woman brought him food - bread and milk for breakfast, dinner and supper alike, "and not enough of that". He begged for clean sheets for the smell of "the tartareous compound and myself was almost insupportable". No change arrived. Eventually he was granted permission to go to Bristol and get his things on the Thursday of the second week. "I carried my box on my head for more than four miles without assistance". [Distance exaggerated slightly of course!] Luckily his wardrobe was not extensive. He brought with him a "Bible, Young's *Night Thoughts*, Prideaux's *History of the Jews* and a Greek Testament.

"As both days and nights were unnaturally cold, I begged to have a little fire. This was denied me, although coals were raised within a few roods of the house and were very cheap." It was not as if the coal was at the Simpsons' personal expense, "they were paid for out of the public collections made for the school. One day.....I showed Mr Simpson my fingers, bloodless with cold. He showed me a cord which hung from the roof [of the hall] to the end of which was fixed a cross stick and told me to jump up and catch a hold of the stick and swing by my hands, which would help to restore the circulation. I had been at the exercise only a few minutes when Mrs Simpson came and drove both him and myself away, under pretence we should dirty the floor.....For my part, I feared her more than I feared Satan himself. When nearly crippled with cold, I stole into the kitchen to warm myself; if I heard her voice, I would run as a man who is pursued in the jungles of Bengal by a royal tiger."

"This woman was equally saving of the candles as of the coals. If my candle were not extinguished by nine o'clock, I was called to account. To avoid being caught by Mrs Simpson, he set "my candle on the floor behind my bureau bed, take off my coat and hang it on my chair's back, bring that close on the other angle and then squat down on the floor and read!"

[quoted Nicholls & Taylor, BPP, Vol.III]



Coal Work

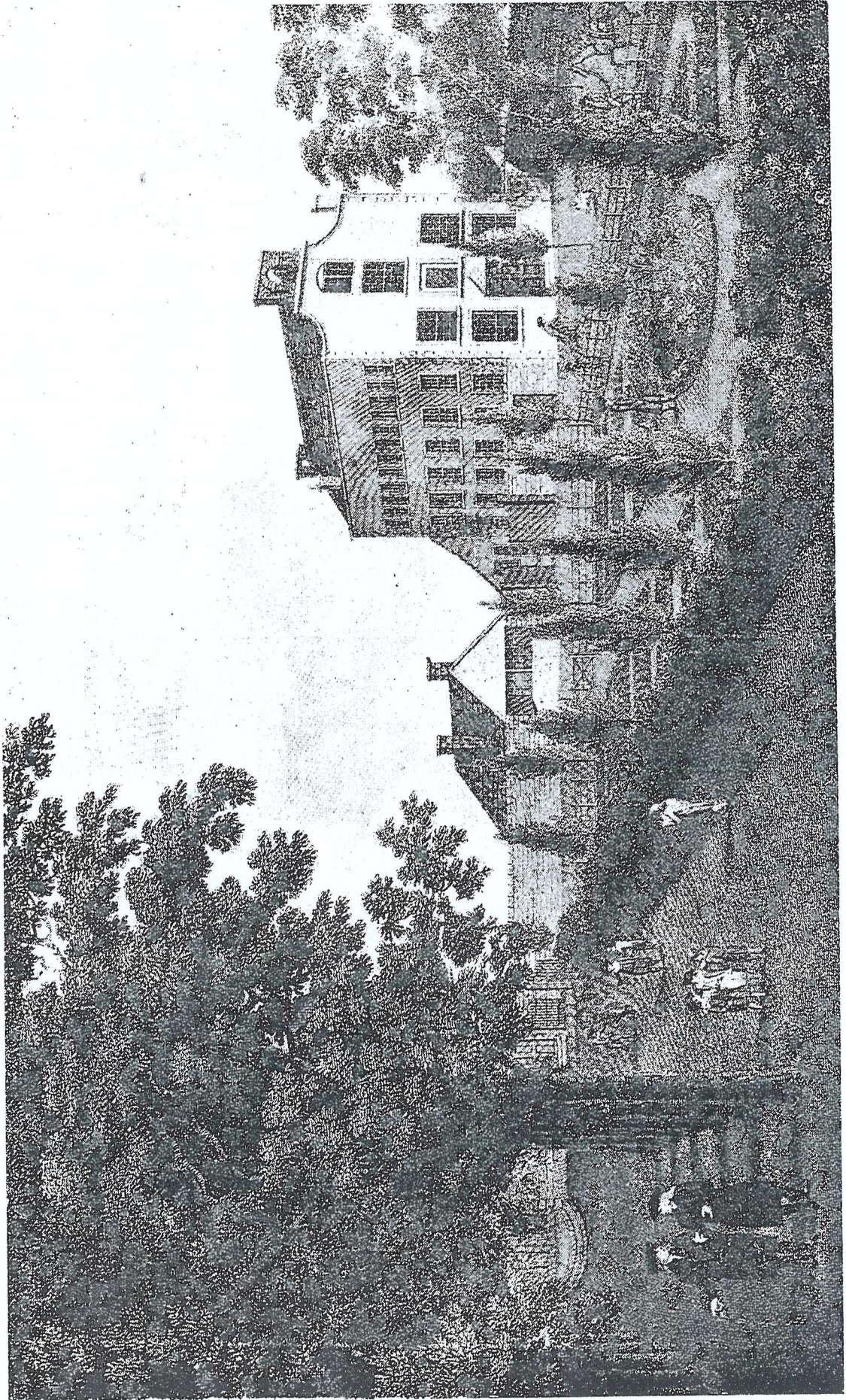
7th September

"Yesterday, a man in liquor riding full speed by the New Church, Kingswood ran against a waggon standing in the road by which means his horse was killed and the rider thrown over the waggon upwards of fifteen yards and very much bruised."

(FFBJ)

same day:

"Tuesday, John Whittington, a sailor, was taken in Kingswood on suspicion of stealing a trunk on Wednesday sennight from behind the Portsmouth coach belonging to Hulbert & Co. containing clothes and bank bills to the amount of £150 which after some time he confessed he had



OLD KINGSWOOD.
[From the Print by Thomas McGarry.]

hidden on Brislington Common where he went with the officers and the things were all found. He was committed to Shepton Mallet Bridewell." (BMBJ)

22nd September

A woman was found dead, overcome by fumes, in a limekiln outside Lawford's Gate. In a separate incident, two children who had fallen asleep were also discovered. "It was a considerable time before one of them could be brought to his senses. Accidents of this kind are so frequent that steps should be taken by way of precaution." (FFBJ)

23rd September

A deed between

Thomas Avery of St Philip & St Jacob, horsedriver

William Avery, of Hanham, Bitton, coalminer

John Avery of same, coalminer

William Horton of outparish of St Philip & St Jacob, glassmaker

Susannah Horton, late Avery, his wife

&

William Fry, the younger of Bristol, wine merchant

William Jones, gent of Congresbury

regarding a cottage near Meg Thatcher's Green, in Barton Regis.

[BRO 19488/6]

21st December

"Monday died Mrs Hawkes, mother of Thomas Hawkes who lately kept the sign of the *Fire Engine* in Kingswood." (BMBJ)

same day

"A man living at Pile Marsh, near Crew's Hole at Kingswood, going into a field to look at his cows left a horse which he rode in the care of his son, aged about eight, at the gate. The boy soon after tied the halter to his arm and the horse taking fright, ran away dragging the boy after him, which mangled him in so shocking a manner that before any assistance could be given, he was quite dead." (ibid)

1783

26th April

"Monday sennight, about midnight, two men broke into a shop at Stout's Hill in Bitton and stole goods thereout to the amount of upwards of £60. A person coming by alarmed the men who jumped out of the shop window and ran down the hill leaving a sack which they had filled with the goods behind them." (FFBJ)

28th June

"Last week were committed to Gloucester Gaol, John Pool and Edward Phelps of Mangotsfield and John Okey and Abraham Franklin of Stroud. The four were committed for housebreaking and neither of them appears more than fourteen." (ibid)

12th July

"Last Sunday died at the Lodge, at Stapleton, Mr Charles Arthur, who for many years with uncommon ability and assiduity conducted that capital coalwork at Kingswood for the Duke of Beaufort of whom it may be said he was a faithful steward and an honest man." (ibid)

[The Lodge at Stapleton was Kingswood Lodge, near the Causeway. The Arthur(s) family, Charles senior and Charles junior served in the same capacity as stewards of the coalworks, first to Norborne Berkeley and then to the Duke for over four decades.]

21st August

The Pugilist and Parliamentarian, John Gully, born at the Rose and Crown, Wick and Abson, was christened this day.

Six feet tall and weighing 13½ stone, Gully's story reads like a romance. With a reputation as a very handy amateur boxer, but a failure in business, he was incarcerated in a debtors' prison with poor prospects of ever being discharged. The severe laws against debtors at the time meant that an unfortunate could be kept in prison for the rest of his life unless some kindly soul paid the debt.

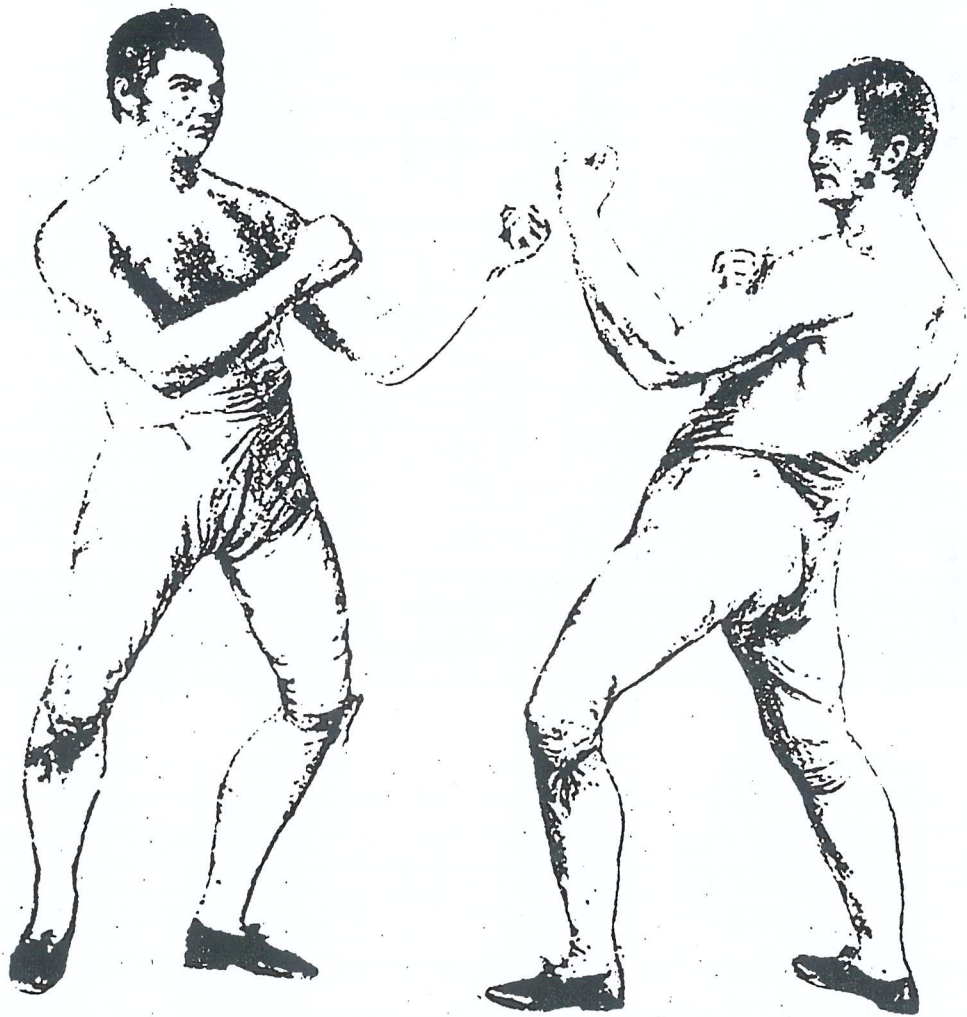
A visit to the gaol by the Bristol fighter Henry Pearce, nicknamed "the Game Chicken" through the abbreviation of his first name, was the lucky break which would change Gully's life. To entertain his fellow inmates, John asked his friend to spar. In a bout which owed more to strength than science, it is said Gully overpowered the lighter, professional champion. The feat became the talk of the town and a sportsman called Colonel Harry Mellish decided to gamble on Gully and paid his debts on condition he consented to an official match with Hen Pearce. John of course concurred and he was released from gaol.

The fight against Pearce took place on October 8, 1805 and lasted 64 rounds. Though Pearce was the winner, Gully's showing was so good that when Hen was forced to retire two years later through ill health, he declared that his protégé was the only man fit to succeed him. John Gully was recognised finally as the genuine king when he beat off two challenges from Bob Gregson, "the Lancashire Giant".

After his second win against Gregson, he thanked the spectators for their support but announced his retirement from the ring. Even HRH the Duke of York, making a personal plea failed to change his mind. He was finished with the fight game except as an observer.

Through sporting connections where his "manly, straightforward conduct" obtained him the patronage of the highest in the land, he was introduced to the racing ring. He bought and bred racehorses, becoming a distinguished member of Tattershalls and amassed a splendid fortune. He was asked to stand for Parliament, which he did - for a bet - and was elected as member for Pomfret, serving two terms.

He fathered twenty four children by two wives, the first and probably the second too, presumably having died worn out. Neither wife is named by the Dictionary of National Biography. He died at Durham, where he had



JOHN GULLY

HENRY PIERCE

become a substantial colliery proprietor, on the 9th March 1863, in his eightieth year, "sincerely regretted by all classes from the prince to the pauper."

He was elected to Boxing's Hall of Fame in 1959.

30th August

The Treaty of Versailles had made Stapleton prison redundant. Evidently, not only the Dutchmen, but also the Spaniards had been cleared out and hopefully repatriated. The Bristol Journal carries the following advertisement:

"To be Lett.

"The premises lately occupied as a prison for the confinement of the Prisoners of War at Stapleton, consisting of two very large spacious and airy buildings with seven or eight tenements or dwellings and a number of outbuildings, &c.

"The whole is in very good repair with plenty of good water in five or six pumps. There are six acres of land, a cow yard &c. These premises would be very convenient for a large manufactory or would make a compleat county workhouse and will be lett for a term.

"For particulars apply James Jones, without Lawford's Gate." (FFBJ)

[A variety of beds, sheets, hammocks, cooking utensils, surgical instruments etc were also sold. Stapleton became a nautical training school which "reformed" delinquent boys so they could be sent to sea as soon as they reached the age of thirteen. Ten years later the premises would again be required for more prisoners, French, Spanish and Americans in the next war.]

30th August

"Last week died in Gloucester Castle, Daniel Kitley, one of the prisoners capitally convicted at the last Assizes for breaking open a house in Kingswood and stealing money out of a club box but was afterwards ordered for 14 years transportation." His partner, John Blancher had been likewise sentenced to death and reprieved. They were probably the two who broke into the shop at Stout's Hill, reported 26th April. At approximately the same time, Sir George Onesiphorous Paul reported the appalling conditions at Gloucester Gaol. The building was in desperate need of repair, the floors so poor they could not be washed. At night the prisoners were secured by a great chain which passed through their individual fetters and was padlocked to the walls. Habitual criminals and convicts mingled with those being questioned on suspicion and men and women were not segregated. No provision was made for the sick. Those chained in total inactivity were particularly prone to illness, especially the virulent strain of typhus known as "gaol fever". Eight prisoners died of the disease at Christmas 1778 and fourteen at the time of the Assizes in 1783. The whole of the area, to the east of Bristol "without Lawford's Gate" was in the county of Gloucestershire. If a crime was committed in the Kingswood area, the suspect would probably be first imprisoned at Lawford's Gate Bridewell and later transferred to the gaol at Gloucester, possibly by cart

or chained to the outside of a coach, where he or she would stand trial at the next quarter sessions or assizes. [Note that John Whittington, (see September 7th, 1782), arrested in Kingswood, who stashed his loot at Brislington, formerly Somerset, was committed to Shepton Mallett to be tried by the Somerset circuit judges.]

(FFBJ; Esther Moir, Local Govt. in Glos, 1775-1800, p113)

1st September

Friday morning, James Bryant, a Bitton man, was executed at Gloucester for sheepstealing. "The property of the farmers of that county has suffered so seriously from villains who live by their plunder that examples will continually be made until the practice is relinquished."

(FFBJ, 6.9.1783)

13th September

"On Saturday died Mr Whittuck, many years steward to Lady Archer and others in the coalworks in Kingswood. He supported the character of a an honest man and is justly lamented by his friends and acquaintance." (FFBJ)

18th September

William Jefferies, killed in a coalpit, was buried at Mangotsfield.

(PRM)

1784

7th February

The vigilance of Mr Giles, the turnkey at Gloucester Gaol, foiled an escape attempt by Benjamin Webb and George Ward "two notorious offenders", found in possession of lock picking equipment and with their leg irons all but sawn through. They had originally been committed to Gloucester from Tewkesbury, where they were arrested astride two good horses, believed stolen, and charged with stealing and killing two lambs the property of Mr Isaac Lewis of Bitton, who had offered £20 reward for their capture. Unfortunately, another county had a prior claim to them. For the remainder of their time in Gloucester they were secured in a diabolical contraption, known with grim humour as "The Widow's Arms".

(FFBJ., I. Wyatt, The Cock Road Gang.)

14th February

Undeterred, small crime continued unabated. The shop belonging to Mr John King of Downend was broken into and robbed as was The Crown and The Queen's Head in Fishponds.

(FFBJ)

27th March

"Monday were executed at Oxford, pursuant to their sentence, Benjamin Webb and George Ward for a burglary at Ensham. They refused to the last to make any confession of their crime but prayed devoutly at the place of execution. They are the same men who were sometime committed to Gloucester for stealing two lambs from Mr Lewis of Bitton. Ward was about 23 years of age and Webb, 38, the former born in Bitton where he had worked in the collieries and the latter at Saltford where he had worked as a stone mason, a brazier and a collier, being a very expert fellow who could turn his hand to either of these employments. They had likewise been accustomed to join the gangs of smugglers and as thieves were old and very desperate offenders."

Ward and Webb were brought back to Bitton by their friends and laid in the churchyard there on 28th March. (FFBJ. PRB)

5th June

John Llewelin, working underground at Coalpit Heath, was crushed to death by a large stone, of a type known colloquially among miners as "a bell mould". (FFBJ)

31st July

The death was reported at Downend, in his 63rd year, of Mr Richard Haynes Plomer, many years "Master of Ceremonies" for the City of Bristol and also at Weymouth. (FFBJ)

[Bristol had its own watering place at Hotwells. Here the leisured classes drank the waters from the hot springs at St Vincent's Rocks and attend assemblies twice a week, presided over by a master of ceremonies to see that decorum was observed.]

7th August

"A few days ago the dam belonging to the ironworks at Wick in the county of Gloucester gave way and inundated the adjoining lands. The proprietors have sustained £400 damage." (ibid)

7th October

Pregnant unmarried girls were still* rigourously questioned regarding the fathers of their expected infants. Such bastards were likely to fall on upon the welfare of the parish and therefore bridegrooms were encouraged to come forward and do "the decent thing." When gentle persuasion failed, marriages could be forcibly arranged. The Bitton Overseers report their expenses of 11s 6d for "taking up Thomas Osborn and keeping him in custody all night and next day before marriage" whilst the parish register records his marriage to Elizabeth Jay, spinster by the Rev Charles Elwes, in the presence of John Wright, the parish clerk and Thomas Proctor. The outcome of such a match surely made in Hell rather than Heaven cannot seriously be in doubt!

PRB; Bitton Overseers of Poor Accounts, 1771-1821
quoted I. & J. Wyatt, "The Poor Law Records of Bitton."

16th October

Thomas James, found "supposed robbed and murdered" was buried at Mangotsfield on this day. No one apparently connected this violence with another crime on the highway reported by Bristol Journal the same day as the funeral: "A person was stopped by two footpads and robbed of 5 guineas in the road between Stapleton and Frenchay, near the Duchess of Beaufort's Park Wall." (FFBJ. PRM)



* See for instance, D.P.Lindegaard "The Simple Annals of the Poor, 1550-1650" & Annals of Kingswood 1750-1775; 1752.

1785

"The Kingswood Carrier" Thomas Rugg could be found at the George in Castle Street and offered his services "in and out" on Tuesdays and Fridays. (Bristol Directory)

2nd March

A lease was drawn up between Thomas Jefferis of Warmley, Siston, timber merchant and Lord of the Manor of Gee Moor, Bitton and John Iles, coalminer of cottages and land at Gee Moor. Rent: six shillings [30p] a year. (BRO 5755/22)

18th April

John Naish was paid 3/2d [about 16p] for iron, rivets and nails and presumably labour, for mending the Bitton stocks.

(Bitton Overseers of the Poor Accounts)

30th April

With poor children at work during six days of the week, their only chance of any education was at a Sunday School, provided by charitable donations. This newspaper report contains a slightly disguised yet fawning plea for funds.

"We hear that a Sunday School was opened at St George in Kingswood, last Lord's Day with about fifty scholars who all attended the morning and evening and behaved themselves with the strictest decorum, There is good reason to believe that though the subscriptions in so poor a parish are unavoidably few, yet the future applications for admission will be very numerous and that the institution will be productive of the happiest consequences if favoured with the patronage of those present whose affluence of fortune enables them to become liberal benefactors of mankind." (FFBJ)

25th June

"The eleven year old son of Mr Ince at the sign of the Hat & Feather, near Stapleton, going to school in Winterbourne was robbed of 13 pence ha'penny and half a pound of butter by two mean wretches, a man and a woman who were lying in wait at Beaufort's Woods. The woman held his hands behind his back whilst the man rifled his pockets and struck him several times."

(SFBJ)

17th September

Committed to Gloucester gaol, Solomon Phipps for the robbery and attempted murder of John Miller, a journeyman mason, on the highway between Lawrence Hill and the New Church. Miller had completed a week's work at Kingswood and was walking to Bristol when assailed by three men. Two of them held him down, while a third, alleged to be Phipps, cut out his breeches pocket with a knife. One of the others called out "At his throat" whereupon Phipps put the knife under Miller's chin, giving him "a dreadful gash" whilst uttering the words "Now go and tell who robbed thee!" Miller was fortunate, for the wound was in his thick double chin which saved his throat. The other two men had not been taken when the paper went to press.

(SFBJ)

[It seems to have been mistaken identity for Solomon Phipps was acquitted]

8th October

"Thursday sennight John Jenkins who was apprehended by James Chappell, butcher of Keynsham, was committed to Shepton Mallett Bridewell charged with having knocked down Chappell on Brislington Common in company with two others and robbed him." Jenkins came from Kingswood.

The facts of the matter were these: The butcher was crossing the Common by horse and cart when he was stopped by three ruffians. One of them cried out "Damn your eyes, deliver" and knocking him down in his cart, stole 5 shillings and sixpence from his breeches pocket. The butcher recovered quickly and "making a spirited defence fetched him a violent blow with his cleaver, disabling him from further attack" and himself escaped with cuts and bruises, thus saving the 14 or 15 guineas which were in another pocket.

In an age without professional police, the butcher made his own enquiries in Bristol, personally arrested Jenkins [it is still possible to make a citizen's arrest] and took him before a magistrate.

The prisoner admitted an involvement on the sidelines of the affair. He said the man who the butcher struck was dead; that he died in the footway near Temple Gate. Jenkins and another man carried him to his lodgings "and threw him down in front of the house". His companion went to Wales. He knew no more than this, he insisted, and refused to confess, much to the annoyance of his captor [who swore he had the right man] and of the magistrate. Jenkins was known to the criminal fraternity for he was spoken to by one of the prisoners at Shepton Mallet, a fact which was gleefully reported but is hardly corroboration of guilt.

Brislington Common, notoriously dangerous to the travelling public was dubbed "The Hounslow Heath of the West". Since the assault on Chappell there had been two other attacks. Three or four men armed with "bludgeons or large flicks" attempted to stop a coach but the coachman "not perceiving any firearms" took his chances and made a run for it, managing to get clear. A lone gentleman on horseback was also struck at by two inept footpads, whose first blow fell on the horse's head, causing the wounded animal to veer to the other side of the road where the other assailant lurked. This man caught the gentleman violently on the shoulder but failed to dismount him and man and beast made a fortuitous escape. (FFBJ)

12th December

Joseph Fry, George Fry and Samuel Ward of Bitton were committed to Gloucester Gaol by Sir William Codrington, of Doddington, charged with "breaking open [in the night time] the house of Francis Williams and stealing therefrom about £7 in cash, a silver ring, a crown piece and other things, which burglary they have confessed and also charged on suspicion of breaking open the house of Daniel Gibbs, which they have also confessed."

(GRO, Q/S)

13th December

The Bath Agricultural Society kindly distributed bounties to faithful old retainers. Number 12 on the list was Nathaniel Hill of Mangotsfield for his "24 years of faithful servitude to one family" awarded 3 guineas. (FFBJ)

1786

4th February

"To the gentlemen, clergymen and freeholders of the County of Gloucester.

"Gentlemen: "Being encouraged by many principal gentlemen of the county to offer myself a Candidate for the office of Coroner in the room of James Rudge, lately deceased, I take this early opportunity to solicit your votes and assure you if I have the honour to be chosen, I will endeavour by an assiduous and faithful discharge of that office to give the Public satisfaction and shall gratefully acknowledge the favour conferred on me. Gentlemen, your most obedient and humble servant."

"Samuel Gerrish, surgeon and apothecary.

Downend, within the Forest of Kingswood." (SFBJ)

14th February

Daniel Alsop was killed in a coalpit and buried at Westerleigh. (PRW)

April

John Jenkins aged 24 of Kingswood was amongst those who supplied "confessions of the malefactors" awaiting trial at Taunton. He swore that he was innocent of the crime with which he was charged, the robbery of [sic] John Chappel on Brislington Common. The true culprits, he said were John Blanchard, Thomas Price and Jane Williams who he admitted drinking with in Bristol - they had paid for the liquor - on the evening of the crime. He had once before been before the court for the theft of sheepskins but the case was dismissed when his prosecutor did not appear. Nobody took any notice and he was hanged at Ilchester, on 19th April, still protesting his innocence. (FFBJ 22.4.1786)

16th April

Nineteen years old Joseph Fry and Samuel Ward, aged 20, lay fettered in Gloucester Gaol under sentence of death. Said the Gloucester Journal: "They are part of the Cock Road Gang, formerly headed by the noted Cayford who was hanged at Oxford. There are twelve more of this gang left. They hold the neighbourhood in so much dread that people there are accustomed to hand over annual premiums of 10s 6d or 5s 0d to avoid their felonious attentions. In the hut where dwelt the family of the Frys, a cave was discovered which was entered by a trap door and here the father used to conceal the sons when any search was made for them."

This protection racket scam [also quoted in Bristol Gazettel was quite different from the original indictment which, as we have seen, was burglary at the premises of Messrs Williams and Gibbs. Perhaps these two householders had bravely declined to pay their "insurance ". The Gloucester Journal report is remarkable in several ways. It gave birth to the legend of "The Cock Road Gang" which endured through necessarily changing, though never formal, membership all the way up to the 1850's. There had been groups in Kingswood certainly since the beginning of the 18th century, some criminal, some engaging in political protest and the two are often confused, but this is the first time, as far as I am aware, that a collective name was coined, and I believe it was conjured by our reporter himself as ginger to his story. Secondly, he goes on, sensationally, to say

Hamblet of Bitton in the County of Gloucester

At a parish Meeting held 19th day of May 1786 in Order to settle the Poor people's pay belonging to the said Hamblet for the Insueing Year Resolved the Overseers Do Pay on Every Friday in Money the Sums that are placed Opposit each And Every poor persons Names and Continue weekly And Every week untill Further ^{orders} from the Next Vestry or Parish Meeting or from or by Order of some Justice or Justices of the Peace for the said County

Judeth Brain	0-2-0
Sarah Batman	0-1-6
Hannah Collins	0-1-6
Susanah Malcher	0-1-6
Dannil Woodward	0-1-0
George Palmour	0-1-0
Widow Davis	0-2-0
John Doord	0-1-0
Mary Chipper	0-1-6
Betty Lippet	0-1-0
Betty Joes & Children	0-2-6
Sarah Croock	0-1-6
Mary Bright	0-1-6
Larenc Bush and wife	0-3-0
Widow Nishle	0-3-0
Thomas Bright	0-3-0
Hester Holbin	0-2-0
Betty Hooch	0-1-9
Mary Watson	0-2-0
Mary Short	0-2-0
Hester Hains	0-1-6
Christlin Hains for Bastard	0-0-6
Widow Isaacs	0-2-0
Joseph Painter son	0-1-6
Mary Haines	0-1-6
Mary Wickham	0-2-0
Yannah Webber	0-1-6

Casual Disbursements	
Mary Wheattem	0-2-0
Widow Leacey	0-2-0
Hannah Brookes	0-2-0
Widow Jorrot	0-1-6
Widow Palmour	0-1-0
Willm Jones and wife	0-1-0
Lidney Holbin	0-3-0
Seluce Hoops	0-1-6
Mary Chipper Bastard	0-1-6
Mary Carrington for	
14 Children	1-3-4
To Tithe for Colls	0-2-0
Betty Joy	0-2-0
Aloud to go for book	
ing after Wm Jones & wife	0-2-0
Edward Harding	0-2-6
Samuel Seates	0-2-6
Samuel Haines	0-1-0
James Butler	0-2-0
Ann Rockwell	0-1-0
<hr/>	
3-1-10	

"The Simple Annals of the Poor"

A Page from the Bitton
Overseers Book of 1786.
[BRO P/B/V/1d]

Newcastle,
Countess of Berke-
ley of Castlehaven,
the Baer, Mon.
Robinson, Sir John
Molyneux and
Lady, Hon. Mr.
Col. Martin, Ma-
Webber, &c.

—The Countess
surge, from Ma-
from Leghorn;
Waterford.
J. White, from
Lip, Scott, from
N. Greenaway,

Slater, for Ne-
kman, for Bre-
for Africa; the
oil. Henderson,
or Everitt, for
Knell, for Dub-

rs, the Justitia,
tratis, Berg, and
l; the Bacchus,
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the Providence,
Grumley, for
Barbadoes; the
re Nancy, Law-
for Waterford.
Member for
poration of that
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he suffrages of
, whose votes
Major Lemon

, Charles Cra-
nty of Brecon,
ghter of Walter
near Aberga-

at Lanboidy in
Howell, Esq.
youngest daugh-
of Langham.
d at Chew, in
or Edghill, of
of Sutton.
ied at St. Cle-
don, Mr. Plura,
er of the late
o the present

—This little party has obtained great honour by
their bravery. The officers are, Captains George
and Charles Duke, sons of Mrs. Duke of Quar-
ly, in the county of Wilts, and John Duke,
Esq. deceased, formerly a resident in Salisbury.

Yesterday se'nnight a most melancholy affair
happened in Kingswood: as five men were work-
ing in a coal-pit, it suddenly fill'd with water,
and they were all drowned. One of the men
has left a wife and eight children, and most of
the others have left families.

Saturday last the notorious rogue Edw. Har-
ris, of Kingswood, who is now in Newgate un-
der sentence of transportation, for stealing 48
guineas from Watkin Bowen, committed a rob-
bery in the goal on one James Purnall, of Kingf-
wood, who went there to treat with Harris about
the purchase of a house, which he had to dispose
of.—After having, as Purnall imagined, nearly
settled their bargain, Harris took him into a pas-
sage leading to the back-yard, under pretence of
having some private conversation with him, when
shutting the passage door, he seized Purnall by
the collar and threw him down, and with the
assistance of some women, robbed him of his
silver shoe buckles; but the keeper and turn-
key soon recovered them from the plunderers.—
Harris on retiring to his room was heard to
boast of having taken from Purnall in the scuffle,
two guineas and two half crowns; the women
who assisted in the infamous transaction are un-
discovered, Purnall not being able to identify
them.—Such scenes as this continually occur
in those prisons where the prisoners have free
communication with each other, and strongly
point out the necessity of confining them in se-
parate cells, a plan which has been productive
of very happy effects, in those places that have
adopted it.

Monday was committed to Bath prison, by
Wm. Anderdon, Esq. Mayor, John Trim, a
mulatto boy, charged with stealing from the
house of Mr. Richard Atwood, the preceding
day, a small box containing two purses with mo-
ney amounting in gold and silver to 49l. 16s. 6d.
a coronation medal, and a variety of small pieces.
He was some time since servant to a gentleman
that lodged at Mr. Atwood's. He was taken
at Marlborough, in his way to London, and
nearly all the money recovered.

The question is
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Nov 11 FFBV
1786

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lines, written
Exhibitor of
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Oxford paper
amusement to

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Feel paint at
When Noah in ark
Prediluvians,
Deem'd his nautic
And pronoun
And Columbus the
He first quitte
In the wide swell
motion,
Than 'midst
Historians well kn
The horse dre
And the grain, th
was trod e
Long before
Time's parts to div
Men invented
And 'twas though
that score
Till a clock-r

that the execution of Fry and Ward - there was evidently no hope of a reprieve - would make the number of persons from the parish of Bitton who had died on the gallows within the last three years up to ten.

The "ten within three years" quotation, unattributed, but used by both Ellacombe [History of Bitton] and Braine, [History of Kingswood Forest] is dutifully trotted out every time any material is published on the subject of criminality at Kingswood, the majority of which crimes, I need not point out, would rate hardly a mention in modern times. I would be grateful indeed if anybody can supply the ten names.

Of the local men who had been executed within the previous three years, I know only James Bryant, 1783, George Ward & Benjamin Webb, 1784, who together with Joseph Fry and Samuel Ward make five. Kitley and Blancher were sentenced in 1783, but Kitley died in gaol of natural causes and Blancher was reprieved. Stallard's execution was outside the time limit, and Mangotsfield is not Bitton. John Jenkins had not yet been hanged and in any case cannot have been known to the Gloucester Journal's reporter. Reverend Henry Ellacombe, vicar of Bitton, from scribbled notes left in his "Manuscripts", evidently agonised over the infamous ten and failed to solve the mystery, yet could not resist including the newspaper's exciting version in his "History" without coming clean about his doubts.

It has to be remembered that Ellacombe's notes are not contemporaneous with the newspaper report and were made more than thirty years later. He did not become curate of Bitton until 1817 and was not born locally. His evidence is from the memories of his parishioners, which like all our memories are faulty and selective. The remembrance that Webb or Kayford's son had only one arm is typical. The jottings read:

"George Dagger alias Ward [crossed out]

John ----- Ward hanged with Jack Dagger alias Benjamin Kayford for robbing at Mr Walker's new budget at Glos.

Benjamin Webb or Kayford [father of one arm man]. George Ward or Dagger

Joseph Fry a cram hand at Glo.
George Fry

Samuel Dagger and Jack Toby for robbing at Glostr.

Whiting."

If these are counted separately they do indeed make ten persons. However, the use of numerous aliases seems to mean that some of the men were counted twice if this is taken as the source. For instance, Benjamin Webb and Benjamin Kayford, "the noted Cayford, hanged at Oxford" of the newspaper report are apparently the same man. All the Wards seem to have had the nickname "Dagger" as far back as 1781 and it is possible that "Samuel Dagger and Jack Toby" refer to John Ward alias Jack Dagger, and John Read, alias Toby, indeed hanged at Gloucester for robbery. John and George Ward have been totally confused.

George Fry, brother of Joseph, despite being listed appears to have been acquitted of the burglary and freed. He may ironically, have been the same George Fry, killed in a pit at Mangotsfield in 1789. It is worth noting that Ellacombe records Joseph Fry was "a (s)cram hand" or a left handed person. Left handedness [eg sinister!] was long considered to denote criminal tendencies, though undoubtedly all the rest were right handed which surely defeats any scientific theory on the subject!

Mark Whiting, who appears in Ellacombe's jottings has no place amongst the rest. His tragedy was in a different era, forty years later.

Our imaginative newspaper hack would have been pleased to know that brains were being racked concerning his excesses two centuries after his story first appeared. There is just one more possibility that he was not an embroiderer at all. The original report specifies "persons" which means both men and women. Could the remainder of Bitton's infamous ten have been women? Desperate "criminals" driven perhaps to infanticide by the mores of the times like those in 1794? Alas in 1786 there is no coroner's book to help us.

The next week our reporter is still in deepest purple, covering the mass execution of no less than nine men, [first names omitted]: Crew, Chapman, already wearing his shroud, Matthews and Alloway in the first cart and in the second Whittick, Fry, Ward, Russ and Davis. It was thought that more than 10,000 people from about twenty miles around witnessed the grotesquerie at the scaffold when the two carts were set in motion simultaneously and whereupon "the poor wretches fell, the whole crowd seemed with one content to utter a groan of commiseration. Just as the malefactors were turned off, two strong flashes of lightning burst from a cloud attended by thunder.

(GJ.16.4./24.4.1786, FBBJ 29.4.1786.

(Ellacombe Mss, marked no 1 but catalogued as 6/7)

29th April

Married at Mangotsfield, the Reverend Thomas Hay, vicar of North Waltham, Norfolk to Miss Bragge, the daughter of the late Charles Bragge esquire of Cleeve Hill, Gloucestershire. (FFBJ)

10th July

An inquest was held at Siston on John Noble who was loading a cart with hay when a sudden gust of wind hurled him to the ground. He died within a few days. (FFBJ)

21st October

An inquest at Hanham was taken by William Phelps, coroner, on Joseph Hudd who fell from his horse on the way back from Bristol and died within a few days, (which may mean that Sam Gerrish was unsuccessful in his bid to become coroner.) (SFBJ)

11th November

"The noted Edward Harris of Kingswood who is under sentence of transportation for stealing 48 guineas from Walker Bower committed a robbery in our goal* on James Purnall" - also of Kingswood who came to the gaol to see Harris about a house he was trying to sell. The bargain nearly completed "Harris took Purnall to a passage leading to a backyard, lay'd hold of him by the collar and threw him to the ground where the buckles of

his shoes were instantly taken out and his breeches torn about to the knee in getting at his money, about 8 or 9 shillings. Some women in the yard** assisted Harris in taking out the buckles. After complaint to the turnkey, the buckles were returned. A prisoner heard Harris say after the above exploit that he had 'done him' out of 'two quids' and 'two half bulls' (a term for guineas and halfcrowns) and somebody overheard him say 'Damn him, let's shear him into the poles and fox him' meaning throw a blanket over his head and rob him. The same Edward Harris is well known for villainy and once robbed him of 13 guineas and his watch by decoying him into a house at Tower Hill." (SFBJ)

More fool him, for being caught twice, you might say. A less pacy version appears in Felix Farley's rival Journal, adding the sensible suggestion that Bristol should adopt the modern method of confining prisoners in separate cells, thus preventing free communication.

* goal & gaol are interchangeable.

** One of the "women in the yard" was Susanna "Shuke" Milledge, born St George in 1767 and a lady of the town. Something of her life in Bristol, death sentence, reprieve and transportation with further adventures in Australia where she crossed the paths not only of her Bristol pal James Pillinger but also of John Cennick's niece, Mary Kennedy, the wife of a marine, will appear in my long promised history of the Pillinger family.

Reported also by Felix Farley on the same day, a melancholy accident whereby five men were drowned at work in a Kingswood pit. "One of the men has left a wife and eight children and most of the others have left families." (FFBJ)

1787

According to an entry in the parish register, there were 4,997 inhabitants of Bitton, including Hanham and Oldland.

14th April

A sensation.

"William Pembury, who with John Harding was convicted of and suffered for having broken open the dwelling house of the Rev. Mr Creech behaved in a most hardened and undaunted manner but two days before he was due to die, he confessed his guilt and also cleared his conscience of a multiplicity of other crimes, amongst which were two for which other persons had innocently suffered; one was at the Lammass Assizes at Bridgwater in 1785 and the other was John Jenkins, who had been convicted of robbing a butcher, John Chapel, on Brislington Common." (FFBJ)

25th April

Sarah Elwes, the wife of the vicar and Henry Creswicke's daughter was buried at Bitton. (PRB)

26th May

"died in London, after a short illness, William Blaithwayte, esquire of Dyrham in the county of Gloucester, a gentleman of large property in Gloucestershire, Devon and Somerset." (FFBJ)

30th June

Mr Joseph Stibbs of Barr's Court and Miss Norton, daughter of Mr Peter Norton were married at St George. (SFBJ)

25th August

The tragedy of John Jenkins confirmed by another confession:

"John Cary, Edmond Connell and Grace Bootle were executed at Ivelchester [Ilchester] pursuant to their sentences, previous to which Cary confessed to a great number of thefts and robberies in which he had been concerned and he declared himself in company with Thomas Price and ---- Blanchard to be the persons who some time since robbed James Chapple the butcher on Brislington Common and confirming that declaration made by William Pembury who was executed at the last assizes that Jenkins who suffered death for the robbery was totally innocent of it."

"John Carey, hanged at Ilchester", was buried at Bitton 26th August. Further milestones in his career are described in the pamphlet concerning the trial of "Dick Boy", Richard Haynes, another Kingswood man, his one time travelling companion, hanged in 1800. (FFBJ., PRB., BRO 25262(4))

3rd November

"Yesterday, an aged collier, driving his loaded cart through the Lower College Green and observing a child in great danger of being run over by it, went to its assistance and in that act of humanity unfortunately fell down, where the cart wheels going over his body, fractured some of his ribs. (FFBJ)

10th November

"Tuesday morning, a young man, in endeavouring to lower the cogs of a mill in Bitton was dragged into the mill and crushed to death." (FFBJ)

15th December

"A trotting match from Tetbury to Lawford's Gate [25 miles] for £50 between a horse belonging to Mr Harris of this City and a horse belonging to Mr Bedford of Downend was won by the former by ten yards in one hour fifty eight minutes." (SFBJ)

31st December

Victory Purdy: "This year I preached sixty five times and travelled according to my computation, in the work of the gospel seven hundred and thirteen miles, mostly on foot.....Praised be the Lord for using me as an instrument in his hand for the good of souls!". (Life of V.P.)

1788

30th March

Death of Charles Wesley, brother of John, hymn writer, Bristol resident and frequent Kingswood visitor.

12th April

"Yesterday sennight, died greatly regretted by his numerous relatives and friends, Mr Charles Whittuck of Hanham in the 86th year of his life in whom the poor have lost a sympathetic friend and bountiful benefactor and society a very valuable and useful member who truly merited the character of an honest man and a sincere Christian.

*Ripened for Heaven by Grace Divine
Like Autumn fruit he fell
Reader think not to live as long
But seek to live as well."*

(FFBJ)

3rd May

"Last Wednesday, a horse driver called at a coalwork called Hall Lane, near Warmley in Kingswood and whilst the filler was measuring some coal to him, he enquired where Thomas Bissick was [the manager of the work and a very honest, sober, person] and finding he was not present began to curse him in a most horrid manner. He d----d his soul, which he said was sure to go to H--- the moment he died and after some blasphemous imprecations wished he might never see him again and immediately with those words from his mouth he dropped down and almost instantly expired".

(FFBJ)

[Unfortunately the sudden corpse is not named. The coalworks was at "Hole Lane", almost impossible for a Kingswood person, myself included, to pronounce, (eg. Crew's 'All.) and the informant probably said "'All Lane". The reporter helpfully added the aspirate.]

same day

"Saturday night two colliers were fighting at a public house in Kingswood, both of them in liquor, when one of them received an unlucky blow which killed him on the spot. The other was immediately apprehended and taken to gaol".

(FFBJ)

21st June

"Great merit is due to those gentlemen who have so readily and humanely promised their assistance in the musical way to the performance intended for the benefit of the poor children of Kingswood tomorrow in the New Church. We are informed that no less than 200 of these poor creatures are personally instructed by some of the gentlemen themselves to compose the committee for the management of the Sunday Schools for spelling and reading and that such order and decorum is preserved among them, so must greatly tend to benefit that populous neighbourhood".

(FFBJ)

[See 30th April 1785. Evidently donations had been forthcoming. Sadly we are denied knowledge of the contents of the musical entertainment but I would be surprised if it was a pantomime. We also see that St George was still "The New Church" more than 30 years after its consecration. Notable too, spelling as well as reading was taught by the benevolent gents at the Sunday School but there is no mention of writing. Reading was encouraged, so the poor might benefit from informed persusal of their Bibles but not writing, obviously on the grounds that the pen is mightier than the sword in the "wrong" hands and a greater circulation of seditious material would result. Which was of course true. Also mindless graffiti which was not considered.]

Summer

Henry Watts sued William Luton in respect of the rights of Common upon Rodway Hill in the parish of Mangotsfield and the proceedings revealed a colourful incident in Kingswood's past.

The plaintiff was a farmer of freehold estates in Mangotsfield worth £30 per annum. The defendant was a tenant of Lord Middleton and Mrs Colston.

The court was told that in 1754 Rodway Hill Estate was let to the father of the defendant, William Luton. Mrs Comyns was receiving the rents. Mr Luton senior died about 1773 and his widow and son continued to occupy the estate. William Luton called the following as 'proofs':

Samuel Chancellor, son of John Chancellor who rented Rodway Hill Farm of Mr Colston.

John Humphries, aged 63, a native of Pucklechurch.

Stephen Britain of Bitton, a coalminer, of 70 years upwards. He "knows Rodway Hill 50-60 years: remembers Mr Chancellor and after, Captain Woodward living in Rodway Hill House and keeping cattle and a great number of rabbits on the hill and in the vineyards and other enclosures. Harry Lacey, a collier, kept dogs and stole the rabbits. About 40 years back, when he rented the colliery of Mr Colston, along with Mr Chancellor's brother and Mr Punter, Captain Woodward shot Lacey's dog, called Pretty One and ripped it open on the hill. Out of revenge, Old Rich, who was a desperate fellow among the colliers, unhung, threw down the gates round the hill and in so doing tore off his finger and thumb. That afterwards, Rodway Hill House being occupied by a Mr Medlicot as bailiff to Mrs Colston, the colliers grew more bold and came in a body and destroyed a number of rabbits and the gates being afterwards open and the bounds partly down, they turned their horses and cattle on the hill. But he even then considered the same part of Rodway Hill Estate and if steps had been taken in Captain Woodward's time, he would have sent them to gaol."

Hannah Shipley, wife of Stephen Shipley of Downend and sister of the defendant, aged 46, remembered her father being in Rodway Hill Estate in 1754.

Zachariah Bailey was steward to Mrs Colston, 1761-1776. (BRO 13999/6)

[The outcome of the case remains undiscovered.]

17th August

George Flook, "killed in a coalpit" was buried at Mangotsfield. The accident was reported on 30th August: "George Fluke, a collier of Kingswood unfortunately lost his life when the ground under which he was at work in a coalpit gave way and fell in on him." (PRM.FFBJ)

20th September

"Friday, a young man very much in liquor belonging to Two Mile Hill, in attempting to get from behind a post-chaise near Stapleton, his buckle

John Henderson.

John Henderson was born at Ballagaranee near Limerick, on the 27th March 1757 of very pious & respectable Parents. He received his education in the School formed at Kingswood in Gloucestershire by that celebrated Character John Woolley; and so rapidly was his progress that he actually became an assistant teacher in that seminary at the age of 9 years. From Kingswood School, he removed to the newly instituted College erected at Trevecka in South Wales by the late Countess of Huntingdon for the instruction of persons designed for the ministry. There young Henderson at the age of 12 bore an active and important part in conducting the academical pursuits of the Students. At this school however he did not remain long, for some differences about religious opinions occasioned a separation and he returned home to his Father who kept a boarding school at Stanham. The short distance of Stanham from Bristol was of essential service to him as it enabled him to gratify his thirst for knowledge of every kind. He studied Physic under an ingenious Physician of this City with whom he was very intimate. In the Languages & Sciences he became very familiar. Later he spoke with fluency and elegance & his remarks on classic obscurities astonished those who were critics by profession. Such were his qualifications at the age of 23. In 1780 Dr. Tucker, Dean of Gloucester, who greatly respected him, offered to send him at his own expense to the University of Oxford; this generous proposition was gratefully accepted by him & he was admitted a Member of Pembroke College. At his first admission, the singularity of his dress & formality of his manners, excited some degree of ridicule, but his great attainments soon removed the first impressions, which were made of him & he became much courted & respected. Of his academical pursuits, little can be said as he did not continue to advance in study as he before had given such great reason to suppose he would have done. He unhappily wanted steadiness & never could fix to any certain point. He was in an ill state of health for some time & departed this life 2nd day of November 1788 & his remains were interred in St. George's Church, Kingswood.

The following Portraits have been published of him
A small Circle in 1789 by Amos & Bagwell, Engravers. Bristol
An 8vo by Jewell, Cornhill 1792 for the European Mag. May 1792
A quarto by James Hogg, Barwick Street London. May 1792.



John Henderson A. B.
of Oxford.



Two portraits of the prodigy

JOHN HENDERSON

of whom a disappointed John Wesley
said had "as great and good talents as
most men in England and lived two and
thirty years and done just nothing".

hitched in one of the spikes which threw him upon his head, fracturing his skull and he was found dead by a waggoner who passed soon after." (FFBJ)

4th October

Betty Wilkins, a servant of Mr G. Robbins, miller of Willsbridge died in suspicious circumstances. The coroner was called and her body was opened. There was as expected, a large quantity of arsenic in her stomach. She was also pregnant. "Although a married woman, she had not lived with her husband for sometime and being pregnant as supposed to some other man it is thought that was the cause of her committing this rash act." The verdict was "felo de se" - that is "self-murder" and she was ordered to be buried not in the consecrated ground of the churchyard but at the cross roads. (FFBJ)

[Presumably with a stake driven through her heart. It is worth comparing Betty's terrified solution with those of other women similarly placed (see 1784, 1794, 1795) in a society where unwanted pregnancy was "a fate worse than death."]

2nd November

John Henderson, born near Limerick in 1757, the son of Richard Henderson who kept the boarding school and later the lunatic asylum in Hanham, was a pupil at John Wesley's school of such precocity that by the age of eight he was able to recite text books and was teaching Latin instead of being instructed! At twelve he was sent to Trevecca in Brecon to teach Latin and Greek to sons of the preachers of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connection. Returning to Hanham two years later, he kept up his studies in languages and science "to gratify his thirst for knowledge of every kind". Dr Tucker, Dean of Gloucester became his patron and offered to finance his entry to Oxford University. John entered Pembroke College in 1781, where he studied Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Italian and German, together with Latin and Greek and obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Unfortunately, he appears to have taken rather too readily to another aspect of student life. [Perhaps simply because he had not played as a boy, he began to play as a man!]* Visited by Hannah More in the company of Dr Johnson in 1782, she complained he was uncouth, his hair untidy and long, his shoe buckles absent. He protested that she was "modelling me that I may be made like a gentleman", and told her, "Do not command me to be genteel.....it no way suits me." She thought he was taking opium and was sadly correct.

In what seems to have been a total religious crisis, he began to study alchemy, astrology, magic and spiritualism, claiming communication with the dead. He refused to enter the church or study medicine, choosing instead to spend his days smoking and drinking. He died this day aged 31 and was buried at St George on 8th November. His distraught father, refusing to believe he was dead caused the grave to be re-opened.

* John Wesley did not allow frivolity at his school, quoting the "wise" German proverb; "He that plays as a boy will play when he is a man".

Wesley, then aged 86, walked from Kingswood to Hanham to comfort the older Henderson. He wrote:

"I spent some time with poor Richard Henderson, deeply affected with the death of his only son who with as great and good talents as most men in England, had lived two and thirty years and had done just nothing."

In the following years, the Hanham hospital moved to Cleeve Hill but Richard Henderson was never the same. He was buried February 14th, 1792, also at St George at the age of 55. His third wife Mary later advertised "business as usual". (DV, Stories of the King's Wood: BRO 39801/F/22)

6th December

A Quack Doctor's Advertisement: "I Ann Fudge of the parish of St George, 4 miles from Bristol was afflicted with the stone, stoppage of urine and a complication of other disorders. I applied to Dr Brunswick for relief and after a short time he made a perfect cure of me." (SFBJ)

20th December

Another of the same: "I Samuel Rogers, collier of the parish of Bitton have been afflicted with the Dropsy for seven years, a little by degrees and it hath swelled all over my body. I tried several Gentlemen of the Faculty for relief without success but seeing of Doctor Brunswick's arrival in Bristol, I applied to him and in four weeks he made a perfect cure of me without Tapping, bringing the Swelling down by internal medicines only. The truth of the above may be known by applying to me or any other person in Bitton, the place where I live. The mark X of Samuel Rogers, March 27, 1788." (SFBJ)

25th December

Victory Purdy: "This year I preached sixty times, wrote a few hymns and an elegy on the death of Mr Charles Wesley who died March 30th aged 80. I have had several mercies given unto me and have left off working at the quarry, being employed by Mr Arthur in his counting house." (Life of V.P.)

1789

Coal was still being raised by the "reel and standers", a type of windlass. The whimsey, a great drum around which a winding rope coiled and uncoiled became generally used to raise and lower the cage by which the colliers descended or ascended the pits. Though primitive and dangerous, it was nevertheless an improvement on another method, "the string of onions" still sometimes used whereby the men were lowered on a thick rope, attached by a thinner rope which passed round their thighs and was hooked to the main cable. Ten or twelve would descend at one time like this. (DV, Kingswood & Bristol)

28 February

"Monday last, Joseph Green, a collier at Coalpit Heath was blown into a pit by a sudden gust of wind and killed on the spot." (FFBJ)

12th April

George Fry was killed in a coalpit and buried at Mangotsfield. (PRM)

Sinkers

Jonathan, Abner & Samuel Tovey
 James & Daniel Tovey
 Simon, Trinder & Wm. Cook
 Wm. & Simmonds & Tho. Turner
 Wm & J^r. Abner
 Wm & James Garner
 Rich. Turner & Geo. Walter
 J^r. Abner & Geo. Simmonds
 Geo. Cole & Stephen Bryant,
 J^r. Tovey & Job Skinner
 Abraham Dando & Peter Green
 J^r. Russell & Tho. Tovey - 2 1/2

Cartmakers

J^r. James & Joseph Skinner - 2

Carpenters & Joiners

Benj^r. & Tho. Whoffinden
 Tho. Cole & Wm. Orchard
 Abijah Hawkins & Wm. Williams
 & Hyrum Rowles & Charles Lovell
 Robt. Sargent & James Hughes 10

Smiths

J^r. Lawrence & Moses Edwards
 Isaac Garrith & Isaac Hillister
 Wm. Pegg & Wm. Howell
 Tho. Norman ----- 11

Tillers & Strappers

James & J^r. Williams
 Christopher Skinner & J^r. Williams
 Isaac Williams & Edmund Wilcox
 Jonathan, Garlick ----- 11

Engin men

Charles Ford & Rich. Green
 Rich. Jacob Hollister ----- 1

Masons & Labourers

Edward Smyth & Tho. Parker
 David Peltier & Wm. Morgan
 Joseph Williams & Tho. Maggo
 Tho. Conley & Tho. Summerell
 J^r. Cordy & Joseph Summerell
 Wm. Garlick ----- 11

Horskeppers

Charles Trinder & Boy ----- 2

Timber Cutters

Joseph Cook & Tho. Bailey
 Robt. Comley ----- 3

With the One hors Carts

Mark Farmer & Sampson Jeffreys 2

Stone Digging & Filling

Tho. & Wm. Gregory
 James Simmonds & J^r. Cook 1

Edward Walton, Line Bourne - 1

At the Farm

James King & Wm. Smart
 Robt. Lewis & Wm. Weeks
 Timothy Player & Rich. Hyatt
 J^r. Farmer with the Team -
 Farmers Hyatt ----- 8

Daniel James & Stephen Dando,
 Tho. Palmer Engineer ----- 3

Hevers July 16--1789

Wm. Williams & Geo. Webb
James Dando & Tho. Harford
Tho. Russell & Stephen Webb
Michael & Joseph Marley
Jm. Smallcomb & James Parlic
Mark Simmonds & Jm. Rowland
Robt. Smallcomb & Isaac Sluke
E. Larson Fovey & Sampson Webb
Samuel Fovey & Jm. Fletcher
Wm. & E. Larson Fovey
Wm. Bryant & Edward Belcher
Geo. & Nathan Walter
Joseph Sluke & Jm. Webb
Wm. Russell & James Williams
Edward Belcher & Daniel Rowland
Geo. Lovell & Samuel James
Wm. Smallcomb & Robt. Bryant
Benj. & James Cole
Wm. Webster & Wm. Russell
Jacob Harding & Tho. Smallcomb
James Premling ———— 4

Landsmen

James Webb & Luke Phillips
Wm. Harford & Arthur Walter
James Sumner & James Dando
Jm. Clarke ———— 4

Drivers

Stephen Dando & Geo. James
Jm. Williams & Charles Bryant
Jm. Farnes & James Dando
Daniel James ———— 4

Daymen & Boys Underground
Wm. Peacock & Geo. Dando
Geo. Peacock & Jm. Dando ———— 4

Coring Boys

Benj. & Geo. Cole
Wm. Cordy & Wm. Williams
James Bateman & Samuel Marley
Wm. & Christopher Skinner
Wm. & Isaac Dando
Tho. Bishop & Jm. Harford
James Dando & Wm. Church
Jm. & Richard Russell
Joseph & Isaac Sluke
Charles & Edward Cordy
Geo. James & Francis Rowland
Jm. & Jacob Harding
Samuel & Wm. Farnes
Matthew Peacock & Wm. Over
David, Harding & Robt. Cole
Wm. Sluke & Joseph Walter
Jonathan & Geo. Williams
Jm. & Wm. Fletcher
Christopher Sumner & James Walter
Wm. Hurri & James Walter
Jm. Selting & James Harford
Tho. & James Dratten
Wm. & Joseph Dratten
Geo. Allen & Daniel Short
James Bacon & Wm. Foyler
Geo. Hollister & Wm. Pullin
Jacob & Samuel Hunt
Jm. Over & Rich. Howe
Isaac Premling & Daniel Allen
Jacob Cole & Jm. Marley
Isaac & Joseph Marley
Tho. Parlic & David White
Samuel & Jonathan Dando
Wm. Pritchard & Tho. Lee
Tho. & Charles Webster ———— 4

Some of the authors coalmining
ancestors [Cole, Skinner, Summere
at work at Westerleigh, 1789
[BRO AC/AS/97/8b]

3rd May

"Last week was fought at Kingswood, a curious battle between Philip James, a day labourer and John Wright, a cobbler. The former has but one arm, the latter one leg. The quarrel arose concerning a female. They fought for twenty minutes amidst an immense concourse of people. At last the battle terminated in favour of James, owing to a lucky blow by which Wright fell and put out his elbow."
(FFBJ)

10th May

The son of Thomas Yates, accountant and his wife Mary was found drowned at the Lower Ironworks, late the Coalworks, at Wick and buried at Wick & Abson. [The same Thomas would die by accident 9 years later, falling from his horse.]
(PRW&A)

22nd May

William Champion, pioneer of the industrial revolution, died aged 79. The story goes that in early life he spent six years travelling the continent, particularly in Holland and Germany, disguised as an itinerant labourer in order to learn the secrets of making brass and zinc - then called spelter. By 1737 he had his own factory in Old Market Street. To oversee the new processes, he brought in foreign workmen, who spoke in so many tongues, the place became known as "Babel's Tower". [Unfortunately for this charming legend, there was at Lawford's Gate, a shot tower, known as Baber's Tower, which predated Champion's arrival by a hundred years. The Baber family supplied the king's forces with gunpowder during the Royalist occupation of Bristol at the time of the Civil War. Perhaps Champion's workers occupied the same or nearby premises and one thing led to another, for the foreign workmen were definitely true, among them my ancestors the Frays and Craymers and must have babbled in languages incomprehensible to the natives.] On moving to Warmley, Champion developed the Warmley Brass works, the largest single producer in Europe, directly employing 600 local people.

He was buried at the Friends Burial Ground at Redcliff Pit in Bristol.

[AB & LH]

12th October

John Tanner, the son of James was killed in a coalpit and buried at Westerleigh. [The father of this boy would later be killed himself. See 15th February, 1793]
(PRW)

1790

New Level works at Soundwell inherited by Charles Bragge from the last of the Player family owners, were purchased by Samuel Whittuck. They contained a pay house, or office, a blacksmith's shop where picks were sharpened and candleholders forged, horses shod and machinery repaired. Pits and timbering cut nearby gave the name to Chiphouse Road. The new level which drained the pits was almost 2½ miles long and emptied into the brook at Made for Ever.
(DV, Kingswood & Bristol)

29th January

A meeting of the Trustees for the care of Stapleton, Mangotsfield, Toghill and Bitton Turnpikes was adjourned and re-arranged for the following Tuesday at the Bell Inn, Stapleton.

At the same time there was a warning: "A desperate gang of horse-stealers are in the country. Let those who have valuable horses keep a watchful eye over them. The keepers of the Turnpike should observe what horses pass by night." (FFBJ, 30.1.1790)

13th February

A gang broke into the house of Mrs Farthing in Guinea Street....and a considerable amount of the property stolen therefrom was discovered in a lodging house at Lawrence Hill, hidden in the hollow of the hobs of the grate. (FFBJ)

28th March

Edmund Sweet, aged 24, of St George was convicted of burglary at the house of Elizabeth Pallin and executed at Gloucester the following 16th April. (GJ)

7th August

Inquests: on John Coleman, labourer, killed during a fight with Charles Breddy alias Bassett, when a blow to the neck below the left ear caused Coleman's instant death. Breddy was sent for trial at the next Gloucester Assizes accused of manslaughter. Both men came from Stapleton.

And on Samuel Smith, a coalminer at Mr Samuel Tippet's works at Upper Easton, St George who was killed falling down the pit, which seems partially confirmed by one of the rare newspaper announcements: "Yesterday sennight, a young man of about 19 was killed at the coalworks at Lower Easton by part of the pit falling in on him." (GRO.D260.BMBJ, 14.8.1790)

28th August

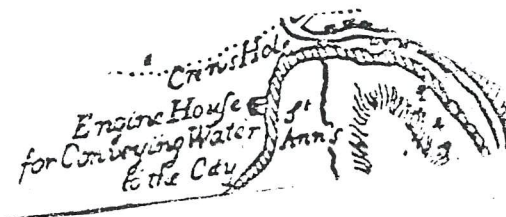
"William Iles, aged 16, going into a coalpit, 80 fathoms deep at Mangotsfield fell out of the cart to the bottom. He was bruised in a most shocking manner and died instantly." (BMBJ)

25th September

"A man reaping in a field in Hanham, being much fatigued lay down and slept under a hedge when [it is supposed] a viper bit him under one of his eyes, in consequence of which his head swelled in a very extraordinary manner and he died in a few days." (FFBJ)

30th October

Two men were killed when part of a coalpit fell in. (BMBJ)



25th December

Inquest taken on John Williams, 33, at the Coach and Horses, St Philip's who fell and broke his neck at a dwelling house belonging to Mr John Mathew. (D260)

[It was not revealed if "Christmas Cheer" had anything to do with the tragedy. It is remarkable that coroner William Joyner-Ellis worked on Christmas Day.]

1791

17th January

On this day, Benjamin Brain, a Kingswood collier became champion of the English Prize Ring by beating the holder Tom Johnson at Wrotham in Kent.

Ben, the son of Aaron Brain was christened at Bitton on 28th November 1756. Known as 'Big Ben' - and sufficiently famous for his surname to be dropped altogether - he was of relatively moderate size by today's standards, being 5 feet eleven inches tall and weighing 14 stones. He was "a mild good looking fellow, sociable in his demeanour, never presuming on his qualities as a boxer" and who "never let a day go by without reading his Bible". In 1774 he beat Bob Harris, his fellow collier, the champion of Kingswood and then Jack Clayton, the Shropshire Champion. Success followed on success and in 1786 he triumphed over Ned Boone, "the fighting Grenadier"; in 1788, overcame Corbally, the Irish Champion and the next year Jack Jacobbs succumbed at Banbury. He came to the notice of the Prince of Wales, later George IV when he beat Tom Tring, a 17 stone porter at Carlton House. The prince lost heavily on the fight. Ben's next bout was a farce. He put down Bill Hooper in the first round, though Hooper was able to stagger to his knees. Whenever Ben moved towards him, he sank down to a squatting position. His orders were to save the fight under any circumstances! This nonsense continued over three and a half hours and because in those days fights had to conclude with a knock out of either man, the match was eventually judged a draw!

Even with this setback, "the Fancy" had spied a worthy challenger to the Champion of England, Tom Johnson and a match was made with Ben sponsored by the Duke of Hamilton. About 20,000 people surged round the open air raised platform. A mighty roar went up as the protagonists entered the ring, with the Duke, in Ben's corner, splendidly clad in Russian sables. They were evenly matched as to height and weight, though at 38, Ben was the elder by six years. Challenger knocked down champion in the first and second but in the third round, was put down himself. The slogging continued, blow for blow until the 18th when a final punch from Ben knocked the champion senseless. A few days later, showing that he had not become over proud, he acted as a second in a bout between Ward and Mendoza.

So the championship came to Bristol where it would remain for eighteen years. [Henry Pearce, Jem Belcher, Tom Cribb and John Gully were all born in or around Bristol]. Ben Brain rested on his laurels after his bout with Johnson for lack of a challenger but was coaxed out of retirement to fight

William Wood. The fight was cancelled due to Ben's illness and he died on April 8, 1794, still undefeated.

It is tempting to wonder whether another famous "Big Ben" was named after Kingswood's modest and unassuming champion!

(Jim Brady: *Strange Encounters*; FFBJ 5.2.1791. BRO, F.C. Jones collection)



BEN BRAIN

1791

9th January

An inquest was held at the New Inn, St Philip & St Jacob on the body of Thomas Ayers, labourer, who died at a Malt house after falling 7 feet.
(D260)

22nd January

Two bodies were found in a Bitton field, a man and a boy, supposed drowned by the sudden overflowing of the River Avon.
(FFBJ)

29th January

"Thursday, a lad named Benjamin Smith about 14 years of age who had been trusted to take care of a loaded waggon through Kingswood by some means fell from the waggon which went over him in so dreadful a manner that no hopes are entertained for his recovery."
(FFBJ)

31st January

An inquest taken at the Bell Inn, St Philip's where the death of the bastard child of Mary Edwards, singlewoman, was adjudged to be from natural causes.
(D260)

19th February

"A man travelling the country as a chaff cutter, was found dead in a coalpit at Two Mile Hill, supposedly in consequence of being in liquor."
(BMBJ)

same day

"Wednesday evening about 5 o'clock, a young child near four years old was taken away from her mother's door in St Philip's by a woman who sells matches about the city, who stripped it almost naked in the Rope Walk near Lawrence Hill and got off undiscovered. Happily, a poor woman passing by took up the child and wrapped it in her apron, which was soon claimed by its disconsolate mother."
(SFBJ)

February

"Tuesday died at St George's in the 105th year of her age, Mary Clements, many years a pauper of that parish. She retained her senses to the last hour of her life."
(FFBJ)

2nd March

John Wesley born 17th June 1703 at Epworth in Lincolnshire, died in London on this day. He was the 15th child and second surviving son of his parents. Short of stature and slim, with a fresh complexion and piercing eyes, he wore his hair, originally auburn, to his shoulders. He was "practical and even tempered" and said "I am always in haste, never in a hurry." He called himself "a Bible bigot" and believed in witchcraft - for "giving up witchcraft is giving up the Bible". Despite suffering from gout, he habitually slept on the floor, usually rising at four, though a contemporary remarked

"If I had such a wife as Wesley's, I should get up at three!"

He thought preaching at five in the morning one of the most healthy exercises in the world [though his sermons were mercifully short, rarely lasting more than twenty minutes]. Aged 71, he endured a surgical operation [no anaesthetics]. At 77 he recommended fasting on Fridays as a remedy for nervous disorders. He was diagnosed as diabetic in 1789 and this no doubt hastened his end in his 88th year. He attempted to impose his austere personal regime on the inmates of the school he founded in Kingswood, but was not always successful. In 1781 he wrote of the scholars: "they run up and down the wood, and mix, yea, fight with the colliers' children. They ought never to play. But they do every day; yea in the school." He himself once stated he regretted wasting fifteen minutes of his life by reading a worthless book. Nevertheless according to one disciple

"It was impossible to be long in his company without partaking of his hilarity".

He was unkind to the young John Cennick in the schism of 1740 but perhaps Cennick deserved it for clinging too firmly to a doctrine of predestination. He was kind to Victory Purdy to whom he gave a suit of his own clothes in 1783. His influence on Kingswood can still be discerned today - in my youth he was spoken of in the same breath as Jesus himself - but historically his ideas perhaps caused the natural leaders of the colliers to seek solace in religion and rewards in heaven rather than on earth through reforming politics. Apart from the 1753 rising* and the strikes of 1777, 1792 and 1795, organised protest abated after the preachers came but criminality remained high on Kingswood's agenda. This problem was more seriously addressed a quarter of a century after Wesley's death in the second wave of Methodism, the Kingswood followers of which, for example the Budgett family,** invoked John Wesley's memory in their own good works in the 19th century. (DNB., Hist of KW Sch., Life of V.P.)

2nd May

John Campling, a labourer, was found dead in a glass house at St Philip's. Verdict: Visitation of God. (D260)

6th August

"Mary Greenwood, for many years a servant at the Cyder House Passage, a respectable public house, was taken, drowned, out of the river at Crew's Hole and carried to her mother's house in Kingswood." Verdict of the Coroner: Lunacy. (BMBJ)

12th August

Inquest at the Woolpack, St Philip's on John Cook, 18, who drowned at a brick pit in Pennywell Lane [accident]. (D260)

28th September

Inquest at the New Inn, Lawford's Gate, on Sarah Cron, who was run over by a loaded cart; reported 1st October: "On Tuesday, a poor woman was run over by a coal cart on Lawrence Hill and killed on the spot. She has left five helpless children to deplore her loss but we hope they will be cherished and protected by the humanitarian public." (D260.FFBJ)

* see D.P.Lindegaard, *Annals of Kingswood 1750-1775* &

** *The Budgetts of Kingswood Hill*,

7th October

Inquest at the Lamb Inn, without Lawford's Gate on Samuel Jenkins, corkcutter who ended his life by blowing out his brains with a horse pistol, loaded with powder and shot. Verdict: Lunacy. (D260)

18th November

Thomas Burchill was killed in a coalpit and buried at Mangotsfield.

(PRM)

16th December

Inquest on a man known only as Joseph, who was found dead in Wilcox's Glass House, St Philip's, where he had gone to sleep. Verdict: inclemency of the weather. (D260)

1792

January

Victory Purdy: "Having read the Bible through twelve times in a regular manner, I began the first day of the present month to read the New Testament with Mr Scott's Commentaries on it." (Life of V.P.)

[He finished his task July 2nd.]

27th January

Inquest on Abraham Newton, run over by a cart near Baptist Mills.

(D260)

14th February

John Alsop was killed in a coalpit and buried at Westerleigh.

(PRW)

24th February

Inquest on John Lewis, burnt to death in a lime kiln at St Philip's.

(D260)

11th March

Inquest on Edith Dorrington, widow aged about 70, who hanged herself in the Quaker's Poor House, where she had lived 20 years. Verdict: lunacy.

(ibid)

19th April

Inquest on Susannah Slagg, 27, who drowned herself in the river near Pennywell Road. Lunacy.

(ibid)

7th May

Inquest at the Cherry Orchard, St George, on Edward Fox, labourer, aged 26 who fell from a hayloft, receiving a violent contusion of the brain from which he lingered three days.

(ibid)

28th July

Memorandum of an agreement in respect of a lease from John Woodward to Richard Haynes, Isaac Jefferis and Samuel Jefferis for coalmining on four closes called "Marygold Lease, Rush, Coldbailys, the Grove and Culbrooks" in Siston/Bridgeyate.

(BRO: Haynes Estate Papers)

9th August

The coalminers of Kingswood went on strike for 2 shillings (10 pence) per week more wages which was refused. Captain George Monrat wrote a worried letter to Henry Dundas in Parliament saying the Kingswood workers were prevailing on other miners, six to eight miles round Bristol, including those at Bedminster and Ashton, to persuade and if necessary compel, them to "stop work and join their confederacy". (PRO: HO/42/41)

25th August

A newspaper report tells an entirely different story, of smiling rusticity, paternalism and a U-turn:

"The pit colliers of Kingswood, having assembled in a large body, peaceably required an increase of fourpence a day to their wages making it equal to the pay of the Somerset colliers. His Grace of Beaufort interested himself on their behalf and their request being complied with, they all returned cheerfully to their work." (FFBJ)

[Fourpence a day for a six day working week was exactly two shillings. The Duke of Beaufort was a substantial Kingswood pit owner.]

31st October

Sarah Packer, wife of Robert Packer, the landlady of the Lyon Inn at St Philip's was killed when she fell down the steps into a cellar at her own pub. (D260)

23rd December

James Hurn, a waterman, fell from a barge, "The Bath Carrier" and was drowned in the River Avon near Crew's Hole. (ibid)

1793

"The advantages arising to the inhabitants of having plenty of coal so near the City are very great, as well from its use to families who burn it profusely, as to poor people who are rendered warm and comfortable by it, in the winter, as to the various manufactories of glass, sugar, spirits, iron and brass in which there is a great consumption of it. There are pits all around the City, in Gloucestershire at Kingswood; and in Somerset at Bedminster, Ashton, Nailsea and Brislington. But the most copious supply is from Kingswood in which there are a great number of pits and colliers houses, which last are so frequent that Kingswood has from the neighbouring hills the appearance of being one vast rural suburb of Bristol. There are several pits within half a mile of the Town, at Upper and Lower Easton and near Lawrence-hill. To those who choose to fetch their coals from the pit, they are sold there at 3d a bushel for large and 2d a bushel for small. They are brought to Bristol in waggons, carts and on horses and are sold to the inhabitants at 14d the sack which holds two bushels and a half."

(W. Matthews, "New History, Survey & Description of the City and Suburbs of Bristol, 1793)

[To think IMPORTED coal now comes through Bristol docks!]

In this year, Louis XVI went to the guillotine and England declared war on France. The prison at Stapleton was once again made ready to receive long term visitors.

3rd February

Inquest on a new born female infant found drowned. "Murder by person or persons unknown." (D260)

15th February

An inquest was held at the Ring of Bells, Coalpit Heath on James Tanner, a coalminer aged 57, killed by a roof fall whilst he was at work with his brother. He was buried at Westerleigh. (ibid & PRW)

14th March

Another inquest, this time on James Tovey, who languished for two hours from head injuries after a rock fall as he was ascending Serridge Pit. He was buried at Westerleigh. (D260. PRW)

April

The first contingent of French prisoners arrived at Stapleton. There were a thousand of them, "cheerful and orderly" said Lord Bateman, who refused to allow visitors because "humanity even to our enemies should prevent their being exhibited to an idle mob, like wild beasts at a fair". Later he would complain about the prisoners' diet: "The bread is scandalously bad. The beef given out to the sick prisoners is hardly fit for dogs".

The inmates ranged in age from powder monkeys of ten to oldsters of sixty or more. Later they would be joined by a large group of Spaniards and a smattering of Germans, Poles, Russians, Swedes, Danes, Lascars, Swiss, Italians, Portuguese and even Americans who ran the blockades. (DV)

25th April

Inquest at the Horseshoe, Downend on William Winterson, labourer, 50, run over by a cart. (D260)

15th May

Inquest at the house of James Purnell, the Pip Horse, St George, on Sampson Jenkins, aged 3, who drowned in a pool near Mr Jenkins's, the Officer of Excise. [presumably no relation]. (ibid)

18th May

Inquest at the Full Moon, Stapleton, on a new born child of Sarah Monks, singlewoman. Verdict: murder. Sarah was committed to Gloucester Gaol but acquitted at the next Assizes, 17th July, in which she was more fortunate than most. [see below] (ibid)

26th June

Inquest on the body of an unknown man, found drowned, held at the house of Mr Crinks, the Lamb Inn, Crew's Hole. (ibid)

25th August

Inquests: On William Searle, aged 9, of the Poor House, St Philips, drowned and on 28th August at Crew's Hole, John Bell the younger, 12, suffocated at Mr Evans's limekiln at 4 am on the 27th. (ibid)

30th September

The establishment greatly feared that Republicanism and The Terror would cross the Channel. Protests and demonstrations caused panic and the army was hastily called in.

On this autumn evening, a crowd gathered at Bristol Bridge to protest against Toll charges. Soldiers were ordered to open fire and ten men and one woman were shot dead.

The Mayor and Alderman rushed out "A Plain, Circumstantial Narrative of Facts and Proceedings of Yesterday in the City of Bristol", which referred to several readings of the Riot Act, the pelting of the soldiers with stones and oyster shells [oysters were the takeaways of their day!] and tumultuous proceedings which had got so out of hand that "the Magistrates were compelled to direct the Military to do their Duty" but, they lamented, "several persons have been killed, some of whom, it is very probable, may have been innocent without any evil intention themselves."

In addition to the eleven dead, a broadsheet lists 51 people by name and parish who were injured, some so severely, they had since died. Two Kingswood people at least were there: Charles Coole, aged 25 of Bitton, who received a gunshot wound in the abdomen and William Horwood of St George, aged 20, shot in the groin and hand.

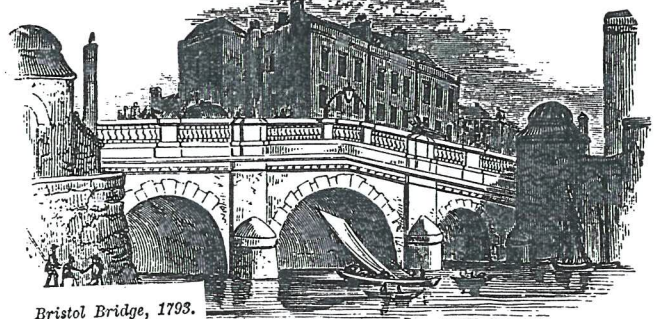
An inquest jury first brought in a verdict of "wilful murder by the person who ordered the military to fire" which the coroner refused to accept and "murder by person or persons unknown" was substituted.

Broadsheets circulated in the city, designed like a handbill for a play: "A Tragedy of Cowardice and Murder", with *dramatis personae*: "A widow with seven children", "An orphan daughter" rendering "a soliquy on prostitution and misery", "a distracted father crying for vengeance", "thirty ghosts lamenting over the shrine of lost humanity" and "a few petty tyrants and the servile tools of lawless power, written in blood and performed to the Dead March with a dance on wooden legs and crutches."

The pamphleteers risked their liberty. For example at Bath quarter sessions, Benjamin Bull was sentenced to a year's imprisonment and to provide securities for his good behaviour for distributing Tom Paine's famous treatise, here called "seditious pamphlets entitled The Rights of Man". (SFBJ, 18.10.1794)

27th October

Inquests on William Witt, 13, of St George killed by falling into a coalpit at Lower Easton and on Martha Edwards, 6, resident of the Poor House, St Philips, burnt to death when her clothes caught fire. (D260)



Bristol Bridge, 1793.

1794

1st January

Victory Purdy: "Began reading the Old Testament with Mr Scott's Notes and Observations". (Life of V.P.)

[He had little spare time, for six days a week he was a working man, having years before turned down John Wesley's offer to become a regular itinerant minister. It would have meant going to Lincolnshire when he preferred to stay in Kingswood. This year he also declined the Duke of Beaufort's offer to become superintendent at the coalworks as it may have entailed working on the Sabbath day. Without fail every Sunday he walked to a preaching engagement. He finished the Old Testament in September 1795.]

11th January

"On Saturday last as several boys were at play round the mouth of a coalpit at Bitton, where they were roasting crab apples, one William Bush ran away with one of the apples which did not belong to him and the other boys pursuing him with such velocity that he fell into the pit and lived only four hours after he was taken out." and on the same day: "A few days ago, a man in the same parish and near the same place on receiving a skip of coal, fell 42 yards perpendicular and was instantly killed." (FFBJ)

same day

Three French prisoners who had escaped from Stapleton were found at Kingsmead, near Bath and taken to Bath prison. (SFBJ)

2nd February

More speculation at the diggings: John Bryant, William Jay, Robert Long, coalminer, James Bush, Robert Brown, Isaac Ship, John White, Jacob White, William Britton and Edward Taylor each made an encroachment and enclosed part of the common waste at Oldland. All to get off or be fined £5. (GRO D108 M287/8)

15th March

There were now 1,031 French prisoners at Stapleton, with up to a hundred in hospital. [Some though, were not as ill as all that. See below.] (Bristol P & P, Vol 3, p219)

same day

was reported the marriage of the widowed vicar of Bitton, Rev Mr Elwes to Mrs Naylor of Park Street, Bristol, the widow of Mr John Naylor "an eminent distiller of this City". (SFBJ)

26th March

"died at his house in Kingswood, Mr John Vaulton, many years a preacher among the people called Methodists." A member of the conference and a correspondent of Wesley, he was buried at St George: John Francis Valton, aged 83. (PRStG.FFBJ, 29.3.1794)

30th March

Inquest at the Queen's Head, Hanham on William Summers, the son of a quarrier, John Summers, drowned in the river Avon. (D260)

24th April

At The Jolly Sailor, St George, a public house kept by Mr Roach, an inquest on a coalminer, Solomon Legg, aged 12, who drowned by the bursting of water at the pit. His father and brother working near the mouth were saved. (D260, SFBJ 10.5.1794)

26th April

There was a major "incident" at Stapleton. About a hundred of the prisoners who were in "the sick ward" rose on their guards. In the melée the guard were obliged to open fire and nine prisoners escaped. Several were immediately recaptured but the rest remained at large. (SFBJ)

4th June

An inquest held at the dwelling house of James Pick, of Hinton, on "the body of a male bastard child born of the body of Hannah Webley, servant to Mr Pick." The verdict was wilful murder and Hannah was taken to Gloucester Gaol. At the next assizes she was found guilty and executed. (D260)

7th June

Three of the escaped prisoners were caught at Newhaven in Sussex as they were about to embark for France "in a boat they had fixed upon". (SFBJ)

17th June

William Bryant, coalminer, aged 14 of Oldland, killed by falling into Soundwell Pit whilst at his work. (ibid)

5th July

"Twenty four of the French prisoners at Stapleton, professed Loyalists, having expressed a desire to enter our service under Lord Moira set out on Tuesday." (FFBJ)

[Were these Loyalists simply being pragmatic? One of the aims of the War was a return to the status quo in France, but it would take the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 before the Bourbons returned. Did any of the Loyalists live to see that event?]

10th July

Lively Grove, a glassman, drowned at Crew's Hole, when bathing with two friends. (D260)

18th August

Robert Bide, a quarryman died falling down Gold Hill Quarry, Mangotsfield. (ibid)

15th September

Inquest on a male bastard child, at Codrington, supposed suffocated. Ann Bartlett, singlewoman, the mother, was taken to Gloucester Gaol, accused of wilful murder. She was found guilty at the next assizes and executed. (ibid)

22nd October

Inquest at The Horseshoe, Downend, on Charles Burchill, aged 29, of Mangotsfield who was killed in a roof fall at one of Charles Bragge's pits. (D260)

3rd November

Edward Tyler, a cordwainer, was found dead on the highway, near the Flower Pot in Kingswood. An inquest at the Queen's Head, Hanham, decided there had been a visitation of God. (ibid)

2nd December

Charles Provist aged 8, was killed when he broke his neck at a coalpit in Pucklechurch Park. (ibid)

8th December

Samuel Pettygrove Reed, aged 9, was killed by falling to the bottom of Soundwell Pit at 1 o'clock in the night. (ibid)

12th December

William Jennings, aged 27, died from a fracture of the skull when he fell about 150 feet down a pit at Westerleigh. He was buried there the day following the inquest. (D260.PRW)

1795

*In a hard winter - who forgets
The frost of ninety five?
Then all was dismal, scarce & dear
And no poor men could thrive?*

And no poor women either. Hannah More also contributed a ballad for this year of "Scarcity and Alarm" : "The Riot - or - Half a Loaf is better than no bread", which advocated restraint and which supposedly "stopped a riot at Bath."

26th January

Inquest on Samuel Wilkinson, found dead in Lawford's Gate Bridewell. (D260)

28th January

Little Mary Moreton, aged 6 ran an errand to Moses Sweet's at Mangotsfield for a ha'penny worth of milk and was killed by a waggon wheel falling on her head. (ibid)

same day

An inquest was also taken on five miners drowned at Charles Stibbs' pit at Warmley. Sampson Crew, Edward Lacey, Francis Stone, William French and Richard Lear bored into an overlap of coal which released a torrent from adjoining old workings. The water rose to 60 feet "in an instant of time". Seven others escaped unhurt. The Bristol Journal, licking its lips over the apparent proof of a supernatural power that would not be mocked reported a few moments prior to the deluge, one of the men had cried out that he "wished the water might break through and drown them all" and relished the satisfactory, if sombre conclusion "he was one of those who perished." (ibid.FFBJ)

6th February

Abraham Watson [48] drowned in a similar accident at Lynch Pit, but his body could not be recovered until 4th May when the waters subsided. An inquest was held at the White Hart, Hanham. (D260)

7th February

The workshop of William Bateman, a Bitton carpenter caught fire and was entirely destroyed, along with working tools, chair, table, bedsteads, mahogany etc. Bateman, an industrious young man, working by candlelight, escaped with his life. (FFBJ)

same day

An inquest on Nathaniel Crew, 60, butcher of the Hamlet of Oldland found dead at his house. Verdict: Visitation of God. (D260)

9th February

Abraham Whittuck, aged 40, one of the proprietors of Bitton coalworks was thrown from his horse when returning from Bristol at about 9 pm. Apparently concussed, he sadly fell into the river Boyd near the copper works and was drowned. (D260.FFBJ 21.2.1795)

12th February

At the White Lion, Yate, an inquest was held on William Dowles, a servant of Mr Chandler of Boxwell, who was killed when a waggon load of coal, pulled by six horses ran over him. (D260)

8th March

Mr Stibbs' works at Warmley was again the scene of a [particularly horrible] fatal accident when a wheel spindle tore into Aaron Jefferis's stomach. (D260)

13th March

William Blaithwayte, Lord of the Manor of Dyrham attempted to extort payment of tithes from the colliers and precipitated an uprising. A mob collected at Dyrham Park to burn an effigy of Blaithwayte. Christopher Haynes, vicar of Siston, reported a spread of the disturbance to Major-General Rooke, and requested military assistance: "the great body of colliers employed in the district of Coalpit Heath have positively determined to give meeting to the greater body of colliers throughout Kingswood in order to commit depredation". (PRO.HO/42/29)

18th March

Rooke wrote to the Duke of Portland praising the local justices, Reverend Dr. Small and Mr Haynes, by whose endeavours no unlawful meetings had taken place and whereby "the assemblage of colliers on Rodway Hill dispersed without fatal consequence". (PRO.HO/42/34)

21st March

William Pool, a deserter from the 122nd Regiment of Foot was found dead at Lawford's Gate prison where he had been lodged awaiting court martial. Verdict: Visitation of God. (D260)

[Thus saving the work of a firing squad.]

1st April

An inquest held at Soundwell works on Samuel Chilcott, a boy of sixteen who fell ninety feet into the Great Cast Pit. The coroner noted sanguinely: "What is very remarkable, this being the third son of Joseph Chilcott's who have been killed in the same pit within a few years." (ibid)

23rd April

George Davis, 12, a coalminer, drowned when attempting to cross the River Avon in a small boat. (ibid)

25th April

"We are creditably informed that unhappy dispute between William Blathwayt, esquire and the Kingswood colliers respecting his new demand of tithes within the limits of the Chace which has been the sole cause of their riotous behaviour is in a fair way to being amicably adjusted to the satisfaction of all parties and that the thanks of the committee for conducting the tithe cause have been unanimously voted and transmitted to Reverend Dr. Small and General Rooke for their benevolent interference and strenuous exertions in accomplishing so desirable an event." (FFBJ)

28th April

Two bailiffs trying to collect the hated tithes were seized and let down into a coalpit where they remained until two in the morning at which time they were hauled up and given refreshments of gin and gingerbread. They were then put down again for another 24 hours until they were prepared to take an oath not to harass any of the colliers again. In a delightful "sting" they were charged 6s 8d for their board and lodgings! (BMBJ)

[This event has long been cited by reporters as an example of the depths of depravity to which Kingswood had sunk. On the contrary, it appeals to me as an example of restraint and shows a droll sense of humour. Poll Tax collectors should be so lucky!]

29th April

Despite hindrance to other officials, the coroner, a well known and frequent visitor went unhampered. It seems incredible that at no time during this era and not for many years to come was the fearsome nature of the coal work itself a matter for dispute, especially as it applied to children. On this day the coroner recorded the death by gassing of 13 year old Henry Bryant at Starveall Pit. Leaving the Rose & Crown, St George, he went to the Queen's Head at Oldland where he heard evidence concerning the death by drowning in a garden pond of Samuel Bryant, the infant son of Sampson Bryant, a coalminer. (D260)

1st May

The coroner recorded an accidental death against John Fletcher, 2, of Iron Acton, burnt to death when his pinafore caught fire and a visitation of God to explain the departure of Arthur Walter, a coalminer of Westerleigh who died suddenly when drinking a bowl of milk for his breakfast. (ibid)

8th May

Optimism concerning the end of the troubles was unfounded. Bristol Council issued the following proclamation:

Council-House, Bristol,

8th MAY, 1795.

THE MAGISTRATES of this City having received Information, that divers evil-disposed Persons have riotously assembled in this Neighbourhood, for the Purpose of preventing COALS and PROVISIONS from being brought into the City of *Bristol*, and have been guilty of several CAPITAL OFFENCES, by stopping Persons on the Road, and robbing them of their Monies,----
Do hereby offer a Reward of

FIFTY GUINEAS,

to any Person who shall apprehend any Person or Persons guilty of any such Offences; the said Reward to be paid upon the Conviction of such Offender or Offenders, by the CHAMBERLAIN of the said City, over and above the Rewards by Act of Parliament.

WORRALL, *Town-Clerk.*

N. B. Information has been received that EDWARD PEACOCK, (otherwise PEAKE,) RICHARD HOBBS, HENRY LEWIS, JACOB PORTER, MOSES ISLES, WILLIAM FRY, and GEORGE JOHNSON, have been active in such riotous Proceedings.

9th May

"We are extremely concerned to find the Kingswood colliers have again shown a disposition to be riotous. As we hoped that their recent complaints having been so anxiously attended to and the cause of them removed, they would have voiced their gratitude for the mediation which effected it and have continued peaceably to follow their occupations for the honest support of their wives and families but sorry are we to observe that their conduct is the reverse of this; the poor misguided unthinking men, they now make the high price of provisions a ground for their tumultuous proceedings and threaten to stop the conveyance of coal to this city as well as all sorts of provisions. Indeed, we understand that on Thursday they did detain several droves of pigs that were intended for our market. In consequence the East Devon Regiment at present quartered in this city were yesterday ordered to be in readiness to aid if necessary the power in suppressing any tumult that will ensue." (FFBJ)

11th May

The coroner visited St Philip's. At the Coach and Horses, Gloucester Lane, he held an inquest on Mary Badcock, a widow of about 55, whose bedclothes caught fire when she forgot to extinguish her candle before falling asleep (D260)

16th May

The "tumultuous proceedings" were over.

"By the prudent and active assertion of the Magistrates of this City and those of the County of Gloucester, with the lucky appearance of the military under Major-General Rooke that spirit of riot and plunder which took place amongst the Kingswood colliers has been happily suppressed and some of the leaders secured without having recourse to violence and we trust that a little reflection will convince those deluded people that such conduct will not only advance instead of reduce the price of provisions but also subject them to the forfeiture of their lives." (FFBJ)

[According to Victory Purdy, those arrested were George and Richard Johnson. I have not so far uncovered a trial of any of the protesters.]

19th May

as work resumed, so did pit accidents: Simon Watson of Hanham aged 12 was killed by a roof fall at Mr Leonard's pit. (D260)

20th May

Francis Rogers, a poor coal carrier was buried at Siston, having died at the Casual Hospital, Bath from a fracture of the skull, the blow supposed to have been struck by a private in the 9th Dragoons. An inquest verdict was "murder by some person unknown". (PRS.BMe 25.5.1795)

30th May

Mary Hodges, 13, of Oldland was burnt to death when her clothes caught fire and the next day an un-named man was reported drowned in a pit at St George. (D260, BaJ)

7th June

Isaac Ship "a noted cow doctor" was buried at Siston. (PRS)

13th June

Charity Cousens, a widow of St George was found dead in a ditch at Dunscombe Lane. Visitation of God. (D260)

14th July

Among prisoners in Gloucester Gaol: Thomas Sharpe, 40, charged on oath of Ruth Bennett with having "begotten her with child, which child when born is likely to be a bastard and chargeable to the parish of Mangotsfield; with refusing to give sureties; refusing to enter into recognisance &c." (GRO Q/S G2 1789-1814)

21st July

At Fishponds, an inquest on Miss Sarah Pride, a native of Leckhampton but an inmate "in the house of Dr Fox", who hanged herself at the institution. Verdict: Lunacy. (D260)

[Dr Edward Fox, later more famously at Brislington, had taken over from the late Dr Mason]

22nd July

Mary Williams fell down some steps at her house in Hanham and broke her neck. (ibid)

15th August

"Sunday died Mr Hemmings at the sign of The Black Horse in Kingswood." (FFBJ)

28th August

At Soundwell, an inquest on George Woodington, 45, who fell down the pit due to the breaking of the rope. (D260)

21st September

and on Thomas Smith, Excise Officer, who fell from his horse and dislocated his neck when returning to Warmley from Bristol. (ibid)

9th November

Richard Johnson, who was drunk, fell into a disused pit at St George on his way home. It is possible he was the same Richard [mistakenly] arrested as a rioter and was celebrating his release from custody. The coroner, recording an accidental death, added a rider that the pit should be immediately filled. Johnson was buried at Siston described "killed in a coalpit" like so many others. On the same day, Hannah, his baby daughter was christened. His wife, "Sarah the relict of the above Richard" was buried six days later, perhaps from the combined effects of childbirth and shock. The eventual fate of the infant is unknown. (D260.PRS)

24th November

Inquest on Hannah Frankcombe, 9, drowned in the Fish Pond near the Full Moon, Stapleton. (D260)

2nd December

Abraham Bayly aged 13, killed falling to the bottom of Soundwell pit (ibid)

28th December

William Johnson, 37, and Thomas Prewett, 17, were killed by the breaking of the rope at Starveall Pit, St George. (ibid)

Appendix I

KINGSWOOD SCHOOL, 1776-1795

John Wesley arrived infrequently at the school he had founded in 1748: "Behold Paradise opened in the wild!" and generally found fault. In 1781: "Some of the rules had not been observed at all; particularly that of rising in the morning. Surely Satan has a peculiar spite at this school."

In 1782, at the time of Adam Clarke's visit,

"the school consisted of the sons of itinerant preachers and parlour boarders, the latter taken in because public collections were not sufficient to support the institution.

"As a religious seminary, and under the direction of one of the greatest men in the world, Mr J. Wesley, the school had great character, both over Europe and America, among religious people. Independently of several sons of opulent Methodists there were in it at that time several from the West Indies, Norway, Sweden and Denmark."

Thomas Simpson M.A. was headmaster, "a man of learning and piety; a gentleman but too easy for his situation". Mrs Simpson, ["the Bengal tiger"], was housekeeper and Miss Simpson, assistant. Cornelius Bayley, in holy orders and "of strictest morals and exemplary piety" taught English for £12 a year and board with the help of the youthful C.R. Bond, a "half boarder of limited experience, shallow in talents, but affectionate". Vincent de Boudry, "a man of plain sense and true godliness" was occasional French teacher.

Despite the above, not altogether unfavourable references, the school was badly organised, each of the masters "doing what was right in his own eyes" and Clarke thought "it was the worst school I had ever seen." The "young gentlemen" who had been introduced as paying boarders ran amok with scant regard for the rules, yet received every respect whilst the little preachers' boys suffered neglect and "great indignities" - enough to put them off religion for life, said Clarke. Had their fathers known, they would surely have preferred them to die in ignorance rather than send them to a place where there was scarcely any care taken of either their bodies or souls.

Clearly, Clarke reported to the founder who arrived to see for himself. Wesley found his rule that "the children ought never to be alone, but always in the presence of a master" flouted, and the scholars playing and fighting in the wood with the colliers' sons. Both masters and scholars could be found sluggardising in bed after 5 a.m. The institution, he declared was slack, lacking in religion and learning.

Not surprisingly there was a change of management. The Simpsons were eased out after twelve years on a pretext that Mr Simpson wished to be itinerant. Cornelius Bayley left with them and only the Frenchman, Monsieur de Boudry remained. Thomas McGeary succeeded as Headmaster, though must have been very shorthanded. Boudry left in 1787. In March that year Wesley wrote to McGeary,

"Dear Tommy,
It is a wonderful strange thing that in all the three kingdoms we cannot find such a schoolmaster as we would. I have sent to every part of England....."

His final line "love to S. McGeary" allows us surely, the merest trace of a glimpse of Mrs McGeary? Eventually McGeary was supported by "three pious and able assistants" probably Richard Dodd, Robert de Joncourt and either Samuel Green or William Vinsbeare who left that year. Now the old preacher was well satisfied: "I walked over to Kingswood School, one of the pleasantest spots in England. I found all things according to my desire, the rules being well observed and the behaviour of the children showing that they are now managed with the wisdom that cometh from God."

In 1792, the sons of preachers made up three quarters of the scholars and many "useful preachers, who must otherwise have sunk under the weight of their families" were enabled to devote their whole time to God's service. McGeary, said Wesley's biographers in 1792, had given great satisfaction. Nevertheless he ceased to be headmaster in 1794, caught up in the crisis which threatened to disrupt the Connexion when the Kingswood Methodists chose the option of separating from the Church of England. He became a schoolmaster at Keynsham but sadly died three years later and was buried in the chancel of Keynsham parish church. He was succeeded at Kingswood by John Clarke, of Coleraine, the father of Adam Clarke.



THE FOUNDER



THOMAS SIMPSON MA [HM 1770-83]



THOMAS McGEARY MA [HM 1783-94]

MASTERS:

Cornelius Bayley 1773-83
William Carr 1789-90
William Collins 1790-95
Vincent K. De Boudry 1780-87
Robert de Joncourt 1787-89
Richard Dodd c1787-90
William Farrant 1789-91
Samuel Green 1787-89
William Moore Johnson 1794-96
William Nind, 1793-94
James Windsor 1795-98
William Winsbeare c1787-87

The tradition of having a Frenchman to teach his native tongue was discontinued in 1789, presumably as a patriotic gesture. In any case, Wesley had a poor opinion of the merits of the French language.

The PUPILS were made up of Students of University standard, lay boarders who were charged between £16 and £20 and the sons of itinerant preachers, aged between eight and twelve who were funded by collections.

These itinerant preachers were the poorest of the poor, receiving no stipend but relying on the generosity of their hearers to provide them with life's necessities. Further, their work took them away from home to trudge threadbare from place to place, leading to much privation for their families. Only after 1774 were preachers' wives awarded "lodging, coals and candles" or £15 a year.

The boys would be dressed from top to toe in

A broad Brimmed Hat
A long tail-coat made of broadcloth reaching below the knees
A vest
Knee breeches of white fustian, fastened round the knee with a "ribband"
Stockings
Plain shoes.

though the paying boarders might appear more extravagantly clad. From about 1788 onwards, they were phased out and supplanted by the preachers' sons. It is possible the colliers' own day schools, boys and girls, continued in the "Old House" though nothing is known about these apart from the fact that the twain evidently mixed, if only to fight! The colliers twitted the Kingswood scholars as "Cockie Booades" as a former inmate heard it and interpreted as "Cuckoo Boarders" but it is surely the much ruder "Cockie Boogets". The Cockie is obvious. A Booget was an ITINERANT tinker's BASKET.

An engraving of the school made in 1790, shows Wesley walking in the garden with another man, thought to be either Joseph Bradford, a frequent travelling companion of Wesley's or McGeary himself. A trio of boys stand in a huddle. Two talk together; one admires a garden plot while another strolls with his back to us, engrossed in an open book. One leads a horse and most interesting of all, two are actually playing with pet dogs, within

sight of the august founder, which perhaps gives the hint that even Wesley mellowed with age. Not a collier's son [or daughter!] is to be seen.

The Roll

1772

Thomas Capiter [1772-79] [yeoman farmer at Grimsby, d 1856]
James Whitestone [BA Trinity, Dublin]

1773

Joseph Greenwood
John Hamilton
Benjamin Harris
---- Pool
William Snowdon
Edward Keil
John Keil

1774

James Greenwood
Charles Whatcoat

1775

John Greenwood
Francis Hern
----- Payne
Richard Rodda

1776

John Morgan
William Morgan
John Robins
William Shent

1778

Isaac Shearing [died 1778]
John Bourke
James Mitchell
Cornelius Peacock [Peacock is a common surname in Kingswood. A local boy?]
Joseph Pinder

1779

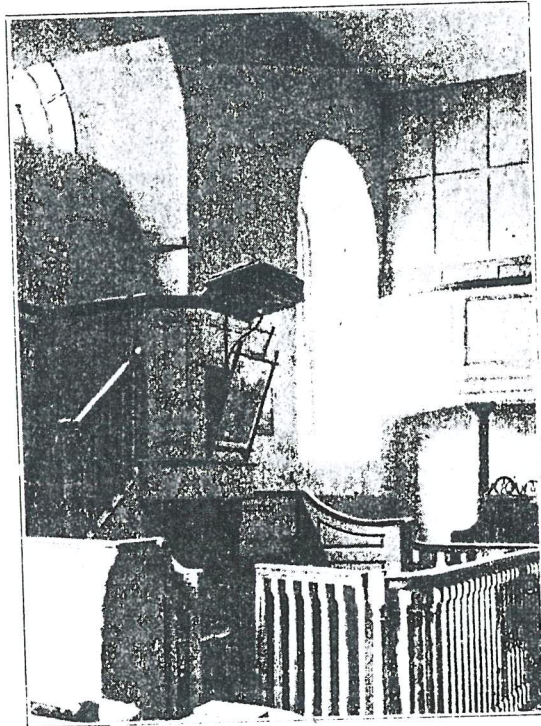
John Barry
Charles Margate
George Snowden

1780

James Hanby
Thomas Harrison [Wesleyan Minister 1790. d 1830]
Thomas Warwick. [Doctor. demonstrated his oxy-hydrogen microscope
[at the school, 1836 - having shown same to
[King & Queen of France]

1781

Thomas Brisco [1781-89]



PULPIT IN WESLEY'S CHAPEL, OLD KINGSWOOD.

1781

James Barry
Joseph Collins
David Evans [1781- 89]
James Pool
James Rowell

1782

Adam Clarke [MA, LLD, Aberdeen. MRJA, FGS, Author & Divine]
Joshua Collins [1782-89]
John Mitchell
James Morgan [1782-89]

1783

David Pool
Isaac Brown
Michael Harrison
Isaac Barry
Samuel Roberts [1783-89]

1784

Jonathon Hern [1784-91]
John Leech [1784-91]

1785

---- Farr

1786

Samuel Barry
Matthias Morgan
John Rodda
William Thom

1787

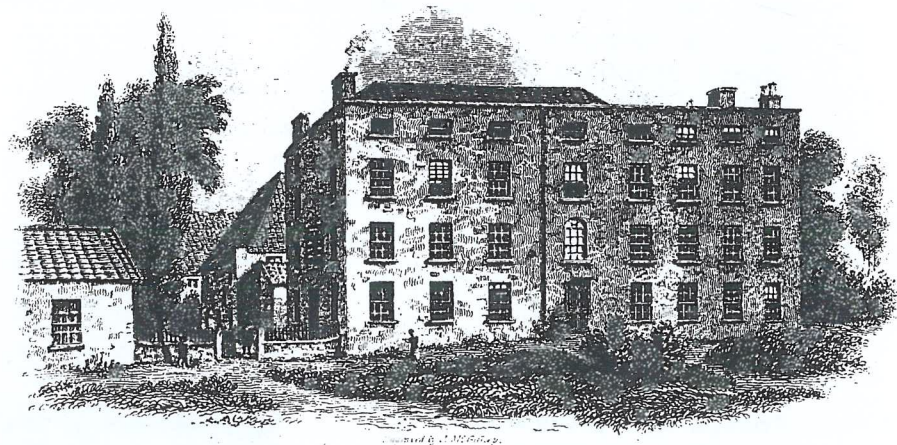
Wesley Hern
Benjamin Rogers
William Hern
Henry Malone [1787-90]
John Younger [1787-92]
Laurence Kane [1787-91]

1788

James Bannister [1788-90]
Charles Cooper [1788-93]
James Cooper [1788-93]
Joseph Child [1788-92]
George Gilbert [1788-92]
Edward Price
Joseph Rogers
John Slocumb [HM Customs, Bristol]

1789

Martin Rodda [1789-96]
Thomas Hale



1789

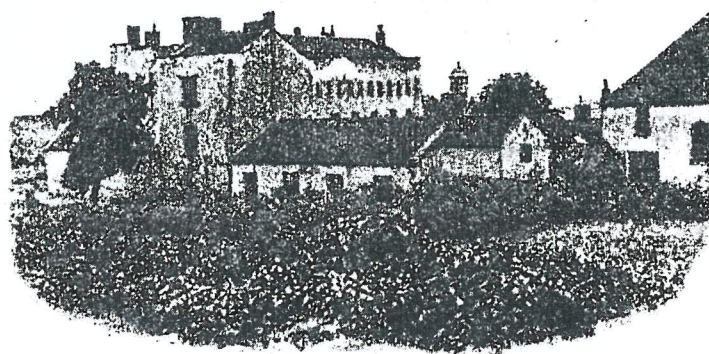
John Rosevear
Gilbert Webb
Thomas Snowdon
John Braune
Thomas Leech
Thomas Jones
Joseph Spicer
William Smith
John Hart
Francis Hill
William Collins
John Delamore
John Edward Gilbert
Joseph Goodwin [cotton manufacturer]
John Baker [1789-90]
Nathaniel Lynch [1789-92]
William McGeary [probably son of the headmaster?]
George Moore [1789-93]
Peter Morgan
James Norman
Benjamin Peacock [another local boy? See Cornelius Peacock above]
James Wood [Magistrate, member Bristol Corp'n d 1846]
William Sheppard [d 1858]
Edward Stamford
William Stamford
Joseph Trueman [left 1792; brewer]
Thomas Trueman [1789-92] [brewer]
William Lane
James Kane [1789-96]

1790

Edward Barry
Paul Grut
Samuel Squires
Joseph Hanby [1790-96]
Joseph Empringham [1790-96]
William Dieuade
William Carr
John Lynch [1790-94]
James McBurney [1790-97]

1791

William Child
William Matthews
William Rutherford [1791-96]
Andrew Inglis [1791-93]
Richard Summers [1791-93; MRCS]
John Wilshaw [1791-96; Excise Office, d.1857]
Samuel Wood [1791-97]
Philip Laby



1792

George Bradburn
Joseph Bradford [1792-99]
Francis Cooper
Josiah Goodwin [1792-98; Wesleyan Minister 1808. d 1866]
John Pritchard
Charles Stewart [1792-96]
James Inglis [1792-98]
John Inglis [1792-98]

1793

Ernest Hern [1793-98]
Matthew Stewart [1793-96]
Charles Graham [1793-96]
James Roe Rogers [Rogers was the boy who is at the foot of the bed
[in the well known picture of Wesley's deathbed]
William Williams
William West
Charles Tunnycliffe
Matthias Joyce [1793-99]

1794

William Blair
Elijah Harrison
William George Horner [1794-1800; Master at KS, 1800-04. Mathematician]
John Mowat
George Vasey
Boston King "Wesleyan Negro Evangelist".*
Theophilus Lessy [1794-1801]

1795

Joseph Algar [Wesleyan Minister]
Matthew Lessey [1795?- 99]

*I can find no other reference to this boy save the intriguing entry in the roll in the 1898 history of the school. Was he himself a negro? His name certainly suggests so.

The dates in parentheses show the years certain boys are known to have been at the school.

The sources are A.G. Ives, "Kingswood School in Wesley's Day and Since" [1970] and A.H.L. Hastling, W. Addington Willis, W.P. Workman "The History of Kingswood School", [1898].

Appendix II

BONNER & MIDDLETON'S BRISTOL JOURNAL: May 20, 1780

The Public are hereby informed that R. Henderson late Master of Hanham Academy has opened a Receptacle for that most pitiable class of the Afflicted - the disordered in Mind, There the Patients will be carefully kept, well used and every way compassionately attended to. The House will be visited by a Regular Physician,

This undertaking will be conducted at Hanham near Bristol on the Upper Bath Road where Particulars may be enquired and legal and honorable Proposals be properly agreed on,

NB The Apartments are now prepared and Some Patients received,

One of the more exotic inmates of Mr Richard Henderson's Asylum was

"LOUISA"

The Celebrated Maid of the Haystack".



LOUISA

The celebrated Maid of the Haystack.

From an Original Painting taken soon after her arrival at Beaton near Bristol in the Year 1776.

In the year 1776, a young and beautiful woman stopped in the village of Flax Bourton and begged for a little milk as refreshment. She was clearly no ordinary beggar for "her whole deportment bore visible marks of superior breeding", yet "there was a wildness....in all she said and did". From her accent she was thought to be German. [Apparent "foreignness" can avoid any amount of awkward questions, disguising class as well as origins.] She refused to divulge her name and for the sake of convenience was dubbed Louisa. She would not enter a house to sleep and took up residence in a haystack. As this behaviour seemed to indicate derangement, she was taken to St Peter's Hospital in Bristol but was soon released, whereupon she returned to her previous lodgings, saying that the only happiness was in the fresh air. Imposture does not seem to have entered the heads of the ladies who fussed around her, though to a more cynical writer she seems to have hit on a way of obtaining provisions without work, but surely if her intention was fraud, it was of a very modest variety. She continued *al fresco* for another four years during which the attention of Hannah More and her sisters was engaged. Financially supported by them, "The Maid" was removed to the care of "Mr Henderson, the Keeper of a Private Madhouse" in the parish of Bitton. In 1785, a pamphlet appeared which purported to be an account of Louisa's travels and deduced she was the illegitimate daughter of the Emperor Francis I. Unfortunately, there was an unexplained gap of seven years between that lady's disappearance and Louisa's arrival at her first haystack. I have been unable to discover her ultimate fate or whether at last there were any red faces.

(BRO 39801/F/22)



Hannah More.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY/SOURCES/ABBREVIATIONS

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 BaJ Bath Journal
 BG Bristol Gazette
 BMBJ Bonner & Middleton's Bristol Journal
 BMe Bristol Mercury
 BRO Bristol Record Office
 D260 Coroner's Book, GRO
 DNB Dictionary of National Biography
 DV Dorothy Vinter
 FFBJ Felix Farley's Bristol Journal
 GJ Gloucester Journal
 GRO Gloucestershire Record Office
 LA John Latimer, "Annals of Bristol in the 18th Century"
 PR Parish Register
 PRB Parish Register Bitton
 PRM Parish Register Mangotsfield
 PRO Public Record Office
 PRStG Parish Register St George
 PRS Parish Register Siston
 PRW Parish Register Westerleigh
 PRW&A Parish Register Wick & Abson
 Q/S Quarter Sessions
 SFBJ Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal

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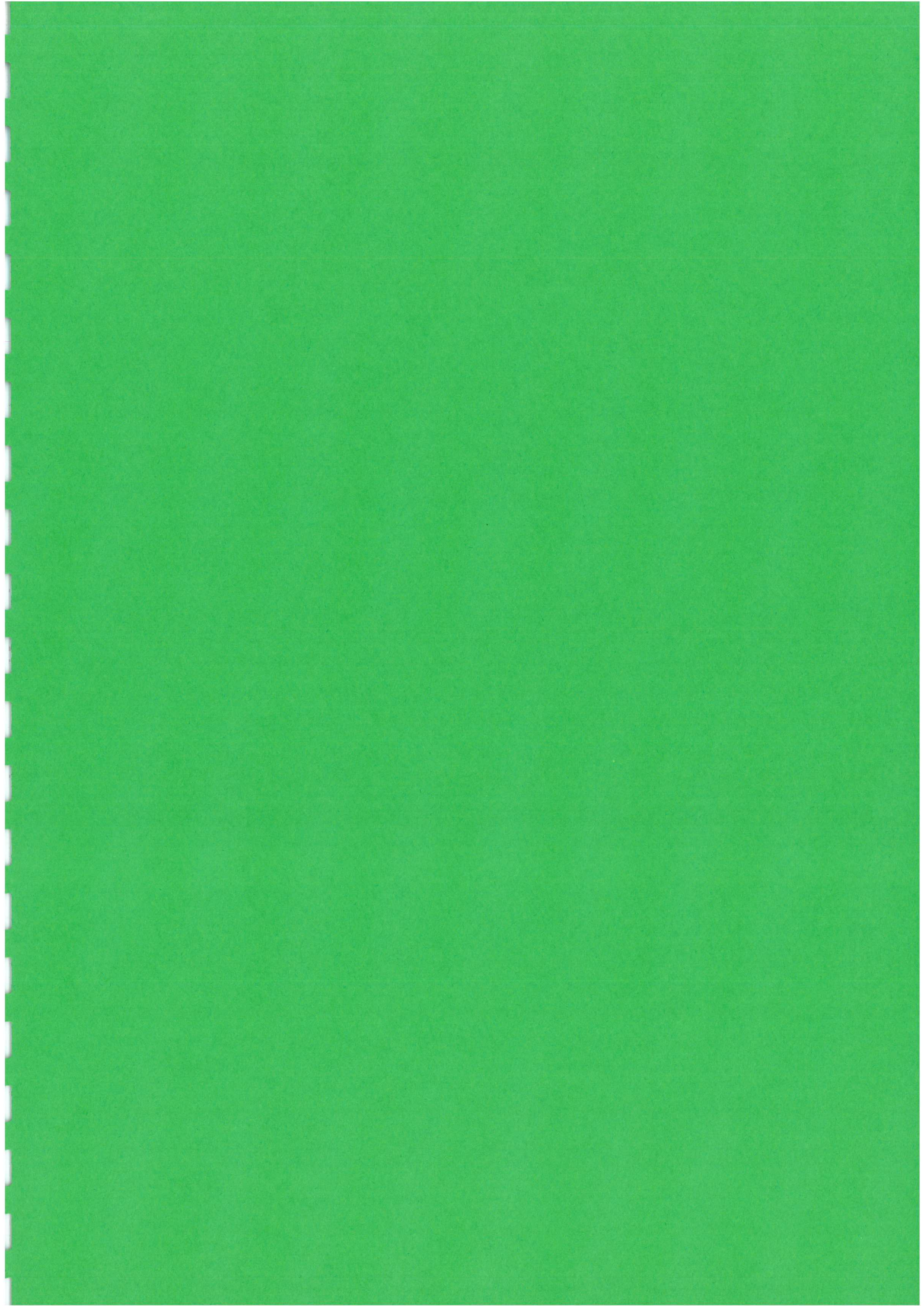
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Council-House, Bristol,

8th MAY, 1795.

THE MAGISTRATES of this City having received Information, that divers evil-disposed Persons have riotously assembled in this Neighbourhood, for the Purpose of preventing COALS and PROVISIONS from being brought into the City of *Bristol*, and have been guilty of several CAPITAL OFFENCES, by stopping Persons on the Road, and robbing them of their Monies,--- Do hereby offer a Reward of

FIFTY GUINEAS,

to any Person who shall apprehend any Person or Persons guilty of any such Offences; the said Reward to be paid upon the Conviction of such Offender or Offenders, by the CHAMBERLAIN of the said City, over and above the Rewards by Act of Parliament.

WORRALL, *Town-Clerk.*

N. B. Information has been received that EDWARD PEACOCK, (otherwise PEAKE,) RICHARD HOBBS, HENRY LEWIS, JACOB PORTER, MOSES ISLES, WILLIAM FRY, and GEORGE JOHNSON, have been active in such riotous Proceedings.