

The Dutchmen.

"Find me a scientist" was a challenge issued by my last brother Colin Pillinger. At Christmas I would send him a story about our numerous ancestors but the nearest approximation to science I came upon concerned 'our Dutchmen', who were skilled metal workers, brought to Keynsham from Europe and were thus in the vanguard of the Industrial Revolution.....



A Brass maker at work - from an old print



A pan made by a member of the Fray Family (possibly Edwin?)

Bequeathed to the Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society by Mary Fairclough. On loan to the Brassworks Project. (Author's photograph)

Question: *"What is the origin of copper wire?"*
Answer: *"Two Dutchmen fighting over a penny."*
(Joke told to me by one of my Danish in-laws)

The 'Dutchmen' in Bristol and Keynsham

"In 1702 the ...Brassworks...was erected near Bristol which has continued to this time but with great additions and improvements and this is now perhaps the most considerable brass house in all Europe." This was Thomas Williams, MP, giving evidence to a House of Commons Committee in April 1799,¹ by which time the Bristol Company had been in existence for almost a century.

The story of the 'Dutch' families who were the nucleus of the original labour force and of a branch of our own family in particular, begins with Abraham Darby, the Quaker ironmaster, celebrated at Coalbrookdale. In 1702 he joined a number of his fellow Bristol Quakers to form the Bristol Brass Company with works at Baptists Mills and later at Cheese Lane. He brought in 'Dutchmen' to operate brass battery work, making cooking pots and other holloware. Rather than the traditional method of casting these vessels in loam moulds, he developed, through his apprentice John Thomas, a process using 'greensand' moulds, with a casting box and core, enabling him to mass produce pots and pans of sufficient lightness.

Darby's journey to the Low Countries of Europe,² an area which lay between the Rhine and the Meuse was recalled by Hannah Rose, the daughter of John Thomas³, his apprentice: *"he travelled over to Holland where he hired some Dutch workmen to operate the brass battery work.* What inducements he offered the highly skilled 'Dutchmen' to leave their homes is not explained, but come they did, and the evidence is found by their foreign sounding names in the church registers of east Bristol at St Philip & St Jacob, at Keynsham and at other places along the river Avon, from Saltford to Bath. At Twerton the Brass Mills were known as 'Dutch Island' where the registers record members of the Graft or Graaf family, identified as 'Dutch', 1737-62.⁴ Crucially, these workers brought their knowledge of advanced techniques with them and the result was a manufactory which operated for more than two hundred and fifty years.

It is obvious that the arrival of the foreign workers and their families, 'speaking in tongues' caused something of a stir. Indeed, almost half a century after the first incomers, when a rival businessman, William Champion, set up his works at Warmley in 1746, to *'make copper and brass, spelter and various utensils'*, the people still spoke such a variety of languages and dialects that their workplace was known locally as *'the Tower of Babel'*.

¹Day, Joan, 'Bristol Brass: the Founding of the Industry' p26.

² At this time national borders, Netherlands, Belgium or Germany did not exist. 'Holland' or 'Flanders' is the catch-all name used for these places.

³ John Thomas, child, 21.8.1751; John Thomas, sen, 11.10.1779, both 'of the wire mills' bur Keynsham,

⁴ R.G. Naish, 'History of Twerton'.

Our own 'Dutch' ancestors lived chiefly in Keynsham, a small town between Bristol and Bath, and its neighbouring village of Saltford. The first evidence of a brass maker belonging to Keynsham is in the marriage by licence of John Alice of Keinsam, [sic], brassman, to Ann Hynd, a local widow on 4th May 1707 at St John's church, Bedminster. Whatever his original name, in Keynsham he became John Ollis, a surname which occurs in our family tree and is still not uncommon in the town today. The fact that he had time to go courting and then be accepted by the widow suggests that he might have been resident for a few months if not years. In Keynsham, the baptisms of several children denote a contemporary 'Dutch' invasion: three boys and a girl: John and Nicholas were born to John Buck, a brass worker and his wife Ann in 1708, William the son of John and Katherine Stegar in 1709 and Jane the daughter of the ancestral Anthony and Mary Craymer in 1711.

John Varoy (senior) is listed as being born in 1705 in Aachan, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany.

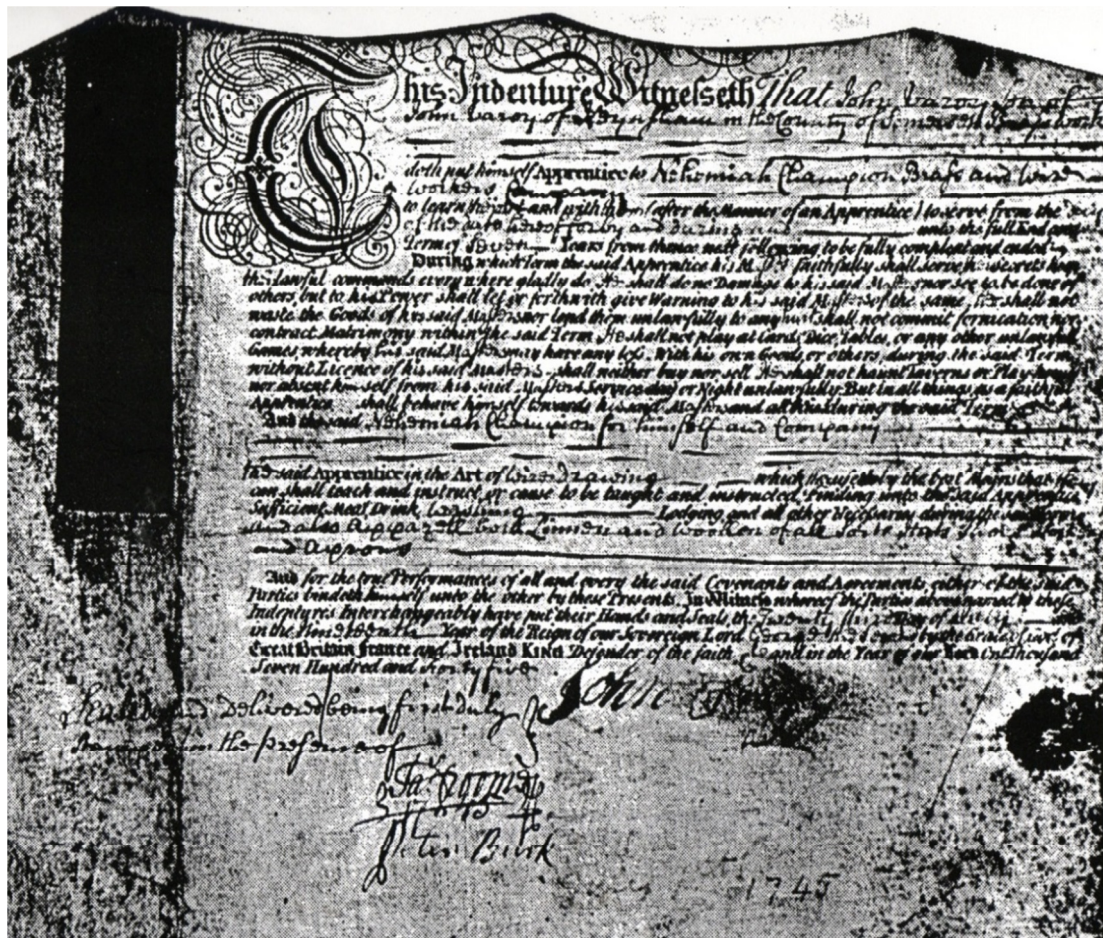
Jane Craymer is listed as being the daughter of Anthony Antonius Craymer, born 1683 in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, and his wife, Marian Kreitz, born 1685.

Anthony and Mary are said to have been married on 11 July 1706 in Rheinland, Prussia.⁵

The Fray family (ffray or Varoy) were allegedly 'relative latecomers'⁶ among the foreign brass workers, but a marriage at St Philip and St Jacob between John ffray and Sarah Norvell on 12th Feb 1708, both being 'of this parish', suggests the family had already arrived at Baptist Mills by then. John Fray, from whom we claim descent is first mentioned in Keynsham on 23rd July 1745 when as John Varoy, son of John Varoy of Keynsham in the County of Somerset, brass worker, he was apprenticed, probably aged about fourteen, to Nehemiah Champion of the Brass Works established there. (below) It is possible that the above John and Sarah, who married in 1708, could have been his parents or even grandparents, though supposing he was born in 1731, we must believe in a fairly elderly pregnancy or that a speedy birth followed a very young marriage, with three Johns born all in a row. There is so far, no evidence to fit either alternative.

⁵ Unidentified source. original not seen

⁶ Day, *ibid*



When I first came across the ‘Dutchmen’ such technical terms as ‘Battery’, ‘Annealing’, ‘Wire drawing’ were (and to a great extent still remain) outside my area of expertise, thus a short explanation of the nature of my ancestors’ work must suffice. At the Brass Mills, large



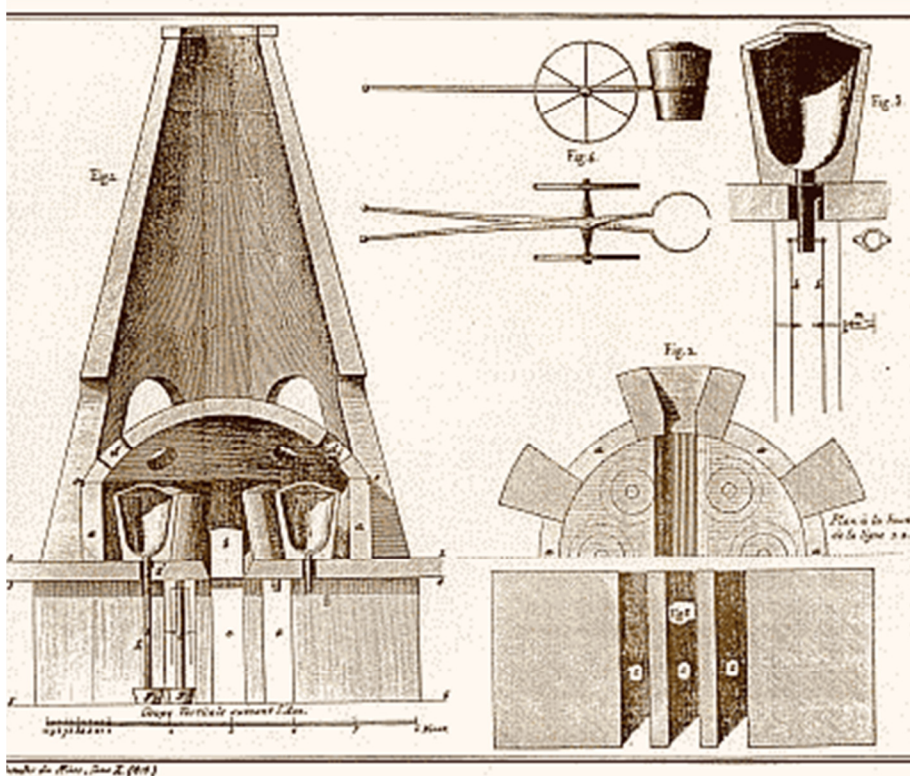
water powered hammers were used to beat brass ingots into sheets and then faster hammers beat the sheets into hollow ware for which there was great demand: vessels of all kinds, pans, bowls, and vats. This beating process was known as “Battery”.

Rolling Mills, resembling an old fashioned mangle, were introduced, which beat the sheets more evenly than hammers. The brass was malleable enough to be worked ‘cold’ but rolling and hammering could be done for only a few minutes as the brass would crack. To prevent cracking partially worked brass was periodically softened by a heating process called

‘annealing’. Heating over charcoal fires in time gave way to bulk annealing in large furnaces powered by the local coal from the Kingswood Coalfield.

‘Wire drawing’ is a metal working process used to reduce the cross section of a wire by pulling it through a single, or series of, drawing dies. The many applications for wire drawing include (latterly) electrical wiring, cables, tension-loaded structural components, springs, paper clips, spokes for wheels, and stringed musical instruments. Although similar in process, wire drawing is different from extrusion as in drawing the wire is pulled, rather than pushed, through the die. Drawing is usually performed at room temperature, thus

classified as a cold working process but it may also be performed at elevated temperatures.



**Annealing furnace,
Saltford.**

The Keynsham outfit was a battery works and John Varoy’s indenture is for a wire drawing apprenticeship at a time (the mid-18th century) when it is believed the only wire drawing in

Britain took place at Esher, in Surrey. From later evidence of the ‘Dutch’ names at Esher and Byfleet it is clear that there must have been a movement of workers between the West Country and Surrey. The Bristol Company bought the Esher Mill for use as a Brass and Battery Works on 30th September 1709 and by 1730 the operation had moved west. I believe that the Varoy/Fray family may have moved between Bristol, Esher and Keynsham and most likely came to England at the same time as the Ollis family, the Bucks, Stegars, Craymers *et al.* It was not unusual for a boy to be put to his father’s trade. The lad signed ‘John Fray’ in a rather nervous signature, which was witnessed by another ‘Dutchman’ Peter Buck!

There is a story told that one descendant, Joseph Fray, began to research the family before the Great War and made considerable progress. In 1916, he tracked down John Fray's indenture to a Fray descendant, Maria Headington, nee Ollis, whose family cottage was next to the Brass Mill at Saltford, (below) He bought the indenture from her for a ten shilling note. So far so good but a shock awaited him: he learned the Varoys came from near Aachen, that is to say Germany, not Holland as he believed. The shocking notion (uncovered during the First World War) that he was of German descent caused him to give up his research in disgust!⁷ The newcomers were 'Deutsche' or 'Dutch', at the time an all-purpose term for a foreigner and the fact that Varoy sounds French rather than Flemish or German is neither here nor there. It amuses me greatly to imagine Joe Fray jumping up and down in

rage on
top of his
despised
research!



***The
Saltford
Brass Mill***

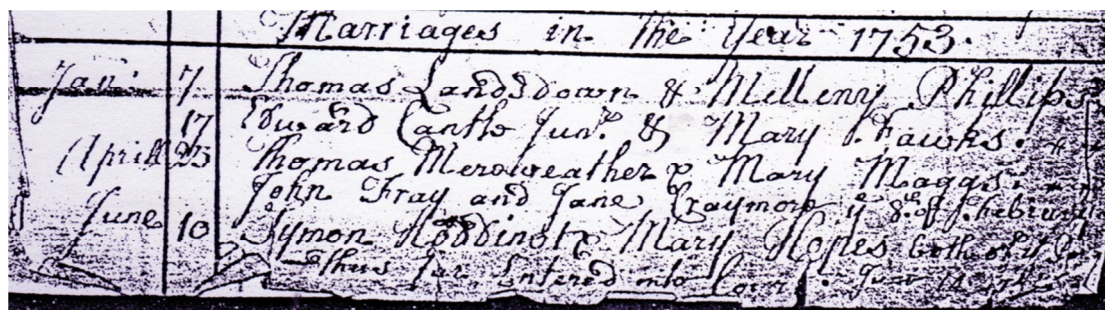
One suggestion explaining the ease with which Abraham Darby managed to convince his foreign workers to migrate is that their own lands were beset by religious intolerance and that they were promised a safe haven in England. As they seem to have settled down to 'match, hatch and dispatch' quite comfortably within the Church of England, the belief in some branches of the family that they were Catholic is not confirmed. They had clearly received a reasonable education in their native places and, if John Fray and Peter Buck were typical, they were literate. Unfortunately this evidence of education would not always prevail among the anglicised 'Dutchmen' after a generation or two.

The next generation

From about 1742, the next generation of foreign brass workers were coming up to marrying ages and for the most part they followed the lead of John Ollis and married local girls and

⁷ Letter from Norma Catlin, Fray descendant, 3.12.2003

boys: William Craymour to Martha Pagett, (our ancestors), Peter Buck to Grace Stallard, Hester Buck to Samuel Harris, all married in Keynsham church at about this time. Our ancestors were exceptional in one respect: John Fray married Jane Craymore⁸, a girl from one of the other 'Dutch' families, with the date, 8th February 1753, squeezed in at the side:



John would have completed his apprenticeship by then and supposing Jane was of a similar age, they were presumably both about twenty two years old. Jane's baptism has not been found (she cannot possibly be the Jane baptised in 1711) but it can be assumed that she is a daughter or granddaughter of either of the Craymers, Anthony or William. At about the same time, in 1745, a Charles Fray married Hannah Fry in Bristol at St Philip & St Jacob.

The Bristol Brass Company had been required to give a bond that should their foreign workers fall on hard times through ill-health or accident they would not become chargeable to the parish, an undertaking to last three full generations. Nevertheless, the Keynsham Overseers of the Poor were still nervous about certain comings and goings of the workforce and their families between Keynsham and the other outlets at Baptist Mills or Esher hence they compiled lists of 'Intruders into Keynsham' in 1747 and again in 1769.⁹ The 1747 list contains the familiar names, plus one other, which suggests that the original Keynsham 'Dutchmen' came from a very small pool of families:

Benedictus Buck & wife, from Byfleet, Surrey¹⁰

John Buck, wife & child

Nicholas Buck, wife & child

Mr Peter Buck from Byfleet, Surrey¹¹

Anthony Cramer, wife & children

Anthony Cramer, junior, with certificate

William Cramer, with certificate

William Fink & wife from Bisham, Berkshire

John Ollis, wife & children

Nicholas Ollis, wife and children

John Steager, with certificate

⁸ Craymer, Craymore, Craymour, Cramer, Creamer, etc

⁹ Held by Keynsham Local History Socy.

¹⁰ Benedictus Buck, the son of Benedictus and Catherine is recorded at Byfleet where he was baptised in 1712.

¹¹ Mr Peter Buck 'of the wire mills' buried Keynsham, 25.3.1772

William Fink is the odd man out here. In 1735 he married Hannah Corkey at St Philip and St Jacob where one of his relatives, variously stated to be either Edward or Stephen Fink 'of the brassworks, Baptist Mills' came to an unhappy end. In 1738, John Willis who kept a huckster's shop 'without Lawford's Gate' and the surely coincidentally (?) named Betty Darby were indicted for his murder.¹²

The next tranche of "Intruders into Keynsham" listed on 8th March 1769 were:

William Chapple, brassman
John Cook, brassman
William Eddington, brassman
John Fray, wiredrawer,
Thomas Noah, brassman,
John Steager, senior & John, junior, Richard & Joseph, Steager, brassmen
John Thomas, brassworker

Some of these have names which sound 'English' though they are not necessarily so. William Chapple (Chappelle?) of Compton Dundon, brassmillman, was an early arrival who married Elizabeth Light at Bedminster by licence on 2nd December 1711; he is almost certainly 'Dutch'. When Thomas Ford, of Keynsham, a wiredrawer, was married at Compton Dundon in 1757 he was unable to write his name, whereas his witnesses Timothy Chappell and Anthony Craymer, both signed, another indication that the newcomers were probably better educated than the locals. A John Chapple senior was 'Clerk to the Mills' when he was buried at Keynsham 1772.

The Eddingtons, otherwise Headington, forebears of the husband of Maria, the custodian of the indenture, are a local Keynsham family.

The Thomas family belonged to Baptist Mills, where one of whom, John was an apprentice of Abraham Darby as already stated. The Gloucester Journal of 1st October 1726 carries this sad report: 'Five men belonging to the brassworks at Baptist Mills having been up the river in a boat were all thrown out by the current. All were saved except James Thomas who was drowned.'

The Noah family belonged to Kelston Mills where a Peter Noah was married in 1728. The Christian names Peter, Anthony and Nicholas were not common in England at the time and point to a continental origin.

It is intriguing to see that John Fray who was not an intruder in 1747 appears to be one in 1769!

By tradition, the name Frankham is usually included in the lists of the foreign workers, but this has now been disproved. The Frankhams are descendants of Walter Frankham, born in Bitton in 1694 who married in Keynsham in 1715, where he may have gone to seek work at

¹² Gloucester Journal, 31.10.1738, with only these bare details

the Mills. Two of his sons were brass workers and members of the family worked in the industry until it closed in 1927. The error may have arisen because of the words 'no parishioner' appears in the Keynsham parish register a number of times in the 1720s and 30s. These words were written against those who did not have legal settlement, for the same jittery fear that they might have a future claim on parish funds. 'Frankham' is among the names with this additional information, but apart from one exception, the rest, Cotterill, Cox, Parfitt, etc., are all clearly 'native'. It would appear that the 'no parishioners' have been bracketed with 'the intruders'. In the case of the first, they would be subject to removal to their home parish if their circumstances became dire, whereas 'the intruders', although they aroused suspicion, were shielded by the Company.¹³

An exception is Jacob Racker. The Rackers, like the Frankhams are Dutch 'by tradition'. Jacob and Sarah Racker baptised several children at Keynsham 1725-31 and were certified in the register as 'no parishioners'. Jacob, who may well have been Raaker (!) married Sarah Willington (a Keynsham surname) at Henbury in 1720. He was a Keynsham brass maker as confirmed by his son-in-law in a Settlement Examination of 1752.

*'Christopher Wise now resident within the Hamlet of Bitton in the parish of Bitton in this county, Wire Drawer, taken upon his oath before Norborne Berkeley & Charles Bragge. Esquires, two of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace this 8 June 1752. This informant sayth that he was born at Compton Dando in the County of Somerset and lived there until he was 18 years of age. Soon after he put himself apprentice to William Champion of the City of Bristol, Merchant and Brass Manufacturer for the term of 7 years and he served the said William Champion about three years at his Brass Works in the parish of Syson [i.e. Siston] and then this informant married with Jane the daughter of Jacob Racker of Keynsham in the County of Somerset, Brassmaker, by whom he hath one child namely Mary aged about 1 year and a half. And immediately after his said marriage he and his wife went and resided in the Hamlet of Bitton and continued there ever since. Informant has worked with his said master Champion in Syson under his indenture all the time and continues the same now having not served out the term of his apprenticeship by one year and an half and upwards. The mark X of Christopher Wise.'*¹⁴

¹³ See Lee Partridge, 'Bitton families' website. I am glad to put the matter straight.

¹⁴ BRO. P/B/OP/6/9/48



Champion's Brassworks, Warmley.

Peter Swymmer (Swimer) was said to be a German, a brassworker who lived at Compton Dando. He had two wives, Grace Welladvise (marriage licence, Bath & Wells, 24th October 1711) and after Grace's death married Betty Stone of Marksbury, 24th October 1721 with another licence. His children are found among the baptisms at Compton Dando but he died 'a Dutchman' in Siston when he was buried there on 24th October 1761.

As he had presumably brought some of his family with him when he came to work at Champion's, his son William applied for settlement in nearby Bitton in 1770.

*"The Examination of William Swymmer of the Hamlet of Bitton in the said county, batteryman, taken on oath this 14th day of February 1770....who says that he was born in the parish of Compton Dando in the County of Somerset. That his father Peter Swymmer was a German and never gained any settlement of himself as this examinant has been informed, and who dy'd about 8 years ago. That the place of this examinant's mother's settlement before her marriage was Compton Dando as this examinant has been informed and who dy'd when (he) was an infant and her maiden name was Grace Williams. * has not gained any settlement of himself and about twenty eight years ago he was married to his present wife whose name was Hannah Davis at Temple Church, Bristol who has now living by her three children, only one of which lives with him, Mary aged 24 years who has gained a settlement of herself and was born at Taplow in the County of Bucks and who has not yet been married. The mark of William Swymmer. ¹⁵*

Before leaving this byway, I cannot resist including the following snippet from Farley's Bristol Newspaper of 9th November 1728. Endorsements of products or services, for a fee of course, though this is never stated, are far from a new idea!

'Jacob Shartman senior & junior & William Shartman: "This is to certify to all persons that are afflicted by worms in many parts of their bodies or any other distemper that I, William

¹⁵ BRO. P/B/OP settlements. * Grace is 'Welladvise on the mar,lic.

Shartman, one of the meltors belonging to the Brass works in Baptists Mills had a worm upon my right cheek for some considerable time and could get no cure until I applied myself to Benjamin Thornhill at his dwelling house, the Green Door, St Philips Plain who made an easy incision of my worm that I scarce felt him cut it and by the Blessing of God and his choice salves and ointments the Doctor cured me in three weeks' time. Witness my hand this 26th day of October, 1728. William Shartman.

"We whose names are underwritten. Being the Master of the Works and chief workmen of the Meltors do testify the above. John Wall, Jacob Shartman senior & Jacob Shartman junior."

A correction was placed in the same newspaper the following week. *"Through an oversight of the compositor..... WORMS should have read WENS....which our readers are desired to correct."* (Worms are definitely worms, but a wen is a cyst.)

The Shortmans, (who had seemingly picked up a West Country accent, hence "Shartman") were previously Kurtzman, and like the Buck family, were in Byfleet, Surrey, before arriving in Bristol in 1713. A present day descendant, Eirlys Spawton, has traced her family back to Ballenberg, Germany, where the baptisms of John, 1663 and Jacob, 1666, the sons of Peter Kurtzman, brass worker and his wife Magdalena nee Blofus took place. Peter Shortman of Byfleet, wiredrawer, a widower aged 28, took out a licence to marry Sarah Newlyn of Wisley, a single woman, aged 18 on 26th July 1734. The couple were married at Ripley and Send, Surrey four days later.

The Keynsham Frays

The many Keynsham Frays descend from the marriage of John and Jane who had eight children at roughly two yearly intervals from John the eldest, in 1753. He was followed by Joseph, 1755, Hester, 1757, Mary, 1759, Sarah, 1762, Leah, 1765, William, 1767 and finally George in 1771. John died sometime prior to 1782, when Jane, described as a widow buried her daughter Hester, who had been possibly earmarked to remain a spinster, to stay home and look after her mother.

John the younger married twice, firstly to Jane Gregory who died in 1787 and secondly to Martha Reed. One of their sons, Luke, born in 1794 was one of several Frays (notably the line of blacksmiths) who managed to escape the yoke of the brass works, in his case by taking the King's Shilling. In 1811, he joined the 41st Regiment of Foot, formerly an "Invalids" regiment made up of the halt and the lame. The regiment was brought up to fighting strength for the War of 1812 when Canada was under threat of invasion by the fledgling United States. Luke was in North America for the duration until the regiment was summoned back to Europe following Napoleon's escape from Elba. The 41st was delayed by a storm at sea off Ireland on 7th June 1815, and so missed the Battle of Waterloo by a few days, but then became engaged in the grisly and unpleasant business of mopping up the remnants of the defeated French Army. The 41st took part in the occupation of Paris from

August until December and then returned to England where they remained, until summoned to an arduous campaign in 1824 against the Ava Kingdom, (now modern Burma or Myanmar). Luke was discharged in 1827 after 16 years' service. He was still only thirty three.¹⁶

He was back living in Keynsham with his wife and two daughters, Phoebe and Emma and in 1841 was working as a wiredrawer at the brass mills. Ten years later, he described himself as 'a Chelsea Pensioner', and was clearly very proud of his Army Service. When his wife Mary died in 1871 aged 77, of senile decay, *her occupation* is stated to be 'Wife of Luke Fray, 41st Regiment of Foot, Pensioner'. When Luke himself died aged 81 in January 1875, his own death certificate, much more prosaic, just says 'wire drawer'. Perhaps his relatives and friends were sick of hearing about his exploits and took a subtle revenge. He was buried in the Baptist churchyard where his age is given incorrectly in the register as '77'.

(Two other Frays were Army men: Robert, born 1861, who joined the 60th Rifles in 1880, and his brother Edwin, born 1879, who joined the Royal Artillery in 1891. Both appear in Army Pension Rolls. They were the sons of 'the other' Edwin Fray¹⁷, and grandsons of John, the blacksmith, who died by his own hand in 1865, of whom more later.)

William, the fourth son of John and Jane married Mary Lewis in 1791 and with a dash of folk memory signed the register as 'William Vroy'! He was another of that branch of the family who became blacksmiths in Keynsham. Later he was a small proprietor of land, 10 perches, which he conveyed to his son James in 1848.¹⁸ James's death certificate states he died of 'diahorrea, six days' most likely in the cholera epidemic of that year; he is buried in the churchyard at Keynsham. Regrettably the memorial stones have been laid out to form a path outside the church and are now mostly indecipherable. Luckily one which remained when I began research nearly 40 years ago read 'In Affectionate Remembrance of James Fray, who died 8th March 1876, aged 83 years. Blessed are the Dead who die in the Lord.' Many feet must have walked over the slab since and the wording is probably gone now. RIP.

Joseph, born 1755, John and Jane's second son married Mary Nichols at St James, Bristol 1785. He died in 1803. Mary his widow died in 1808 leaving her effects (under £100) to her son William Fray of St James Bath. This William was born in 1786 and in 1841 was living at Walcot with Anna Fray, 30 and a little girl, Frances aged three. Frances Susan Fray died the next year. Ann Love Fray, widow, married William Jordan at St James Bath in 1837 – though if she and Anna are the same, why did she not call herself Jordan? By 1851, William Fray, 'aged 65, smith, unmarried' was living in Newington, London. He died there later that year. Some people are destined to remain mysteries.

¹⁶ Ref WO 97/1-1271, shown as Luke Fry, born *Cansome*, Somerset.

¹⁷ Two Edwins, born 1833/34 caused considerable confusion, though I believe I have identified them correctly.

¹⁸ BRO 35989/84/85/92/93.

The Robbins Family

Our descent is through John and Jane Fray's youngest child, George, born in 1771 who married Nancy Robbins in 1793. Pleasingly, both parties signed the register, witnessed by

N^o 361

George Fray of [this] Parish Bachelor
and Nancy Robbins of [the] Parish Spinster were
Married in this [Church] by [banns]
this fifteenth Day of April in the Year One Thousand seven Hundred
and ninety three by me John Jones [Vicar]
This Marriage was solemnized between Us } George Fray
Nancy Robbins
In the }
Presence of } Joseph Robbins
Henry Jones

Nancy's brother Joseph, who also signed. In future generations few members of the family would be literate. Nancy, who was born in Keynsham in 1767 came from an old established Bitton family of the 'middling sort', who though not rich, their general solidity can be gathered from the apprenticeships they obtained for their sons and the marriage licences they procured for both their boys and girls. A marriage licence which required an oath by a bondsman of suitable standing was more expensive than a wedding by banns and indicated status. It allowed those with social aspirations to ape their betters, (who always preferred licences) and thus ascend a rung of the ladder. Banns required residence in the parish of one or other of the parties and when called in church for three clear Sundays enabled speculation concerning the bride's condition by all and sundry. A licence, whereby the marriage could take place in a church of one's own choosing, presented a *fait accompli*. Being 'in trade' might be contemptuously sniffed at by the upper classes, but formal apprenticeships led to 'Freedom', that is the right to vote in elections which provided a pathway into local politics. Josias Robbins, whose sisters married into the large Kingswood clans surnamed Brain and Britton was born in Bitton, the son of the parish clerk. He was apprenticed to a clockmaker in Bristol and once his time was served, married Martha Holbin by licence in St Stephen's Church in the City in 1714. The relationship between Martha and Josias's mother who was also a Holbin, called Elizabeth, is too complicated to fathom, but certainly smacks of 'keeping it in the family'. Not long after Josias and Martha were married he lent £25 to a coalminer called John Naish as a mortgage on 'a cottage in Kingswood, near a Fishpond' which may even refer to the suburb of Bristol now known as Fishponds.¹⁹

In December 1726 there was a hullabaloo in Bitton when Abraham Caynes 'a notorious robber and housebreaker' was taken into custody at Hullavington, near Malmesbury, by

¹⁹ BRO 5139/397. This typescript reference erroneously calls Josias 'a clothmaker'.

agents of a local bigwig, the Justice of the Peace, Thomas Trye. Caynes' whereabouts had been 'nosed' to the authorities by an informer, one Aaron Gane, who was arrested as part of a gang which had allegedly committed up to ten robberies in the Kingswood area. The haul included two sheep from a Mr Pinker and, a much bigger deal, a furnace from Josias Robbins of Bitton. I am boggled by the idea of this furnace. Hot or cold, oven or fireplace? What was its size or weight? How did they get it away, dispose of it? Was it a specialist piece of industrial equipment stolen by order of another clockmaker? Was it ever recovered?

The local papers reported that: *'Abraham Caynes made all endeavours possible to prevent being taken: he broke through a hedge from the highway and made to a farmer's house where the officers found him in an Ox's stall covered with hay and straw. He begged heartily for mercy owing his life to be at the disposal of Common Justice. There are warrants out for several more of 'em, whereof some are his own brothers.'*²⁰

On the following 14th January, William Batman and Elizabeth Jones were also arrested and thrown into the Bridewell at Lawford's Gate, the lock-up used for those who lived on the Gloucestershire side of Bristol. Batman was charged with being a confederate of Caynes and with breaking into the house of a Mr Ezekiel Cox at Mangotsfield. Elizabeth Jones, who was Abraham Caynes' mother-in-law, was accused of receiving stolen goods. They were *'conveyed on horseback under sufficient guard'* to Gloucester Castle to join Caynes, *'the Captain of their Gang'* and Gane. Another man, taken in a house of ill-repute at Lawrence Hill, Bristol, escaped. *'Divers sorts of suspected goods [were] found on Caynes, Batman, Jones and Gane.'*²¹

There was not much argument and Abraham Caynes and William Batman, were found guilty as charged, and hanged at Gloucester two months later. Elizabeth Jones was spared the gallows but was burnt in the hand and released.²² Back home in Bitton she was paid half a crown by the Bitton Overseers of the Poor a month later to look after two of Caynes' children, her grandchildren, who had been orphaned by judicial murder. Batman's wife Mary, who had recently given birth, was nursing William's youngest child, and received welfare of one shilling and ninepence. Aaron Gane, who had turned King's Evidence, was pardoned.

Did Josias Robbins say *"serve them right"*? If so, he shared the reaction of one of his neighbours, Mrs Mary Dafter, who spared one terse line in respect of the hanging of three men in 1722 who had been caught stealing lead from (the same) Squire Trye's roof. She was kinder to a fourth accomplice reprieved for transportation, (to America then!) if only for the sake of his aged mother. If Mary's opinion was generally typical, in almost every other way

²⁰ Samuel Farley's Bristol Journal, 30.12.1726

²¹ *ibid*, 14/21.1.1727

²² *Ibid*, 18.3.1727. The Caynes/Caines family, also mentioned in Part1, would become notorious in Kingswood in later years as principal members of the 'Cock Road Gang', many of whom were hanged or transported.

she was unique; a woman in a man's world. Following the death of her husband, she took over his job as steward (estate manager) to Sir John Newton of Barr's Court, who was frequently away in London. She wrote to him each week concerning business matters, rents, and coalmining leases, providing a wealth of information on local matters and families. But most joy is to be had in the gossip references she makes to her own private life: her son's '*unfortunate match*' with a woman twice his age; his sudden early death followed by ruinous litigation with his widow; these cases along with the account of Mary's stepson's incarceration in a debtor's prison are windows into another world, yet are curiously timeless and worth a book on their own.²³

Josias Robbins, the clockmaker, set up the church clock at Keynsham in 1729.²⁴ Later, in 1741, sundials were placed above the clock face on the west and south side of the tower but whether this was belt and braces on Josias's part is unknown.

Nothing more is known of him until, aware of his imminent death, he signed his will on 11th January 1749/50. He was a widower, and if he had had children, none survived for all the bequests are to his seven sisters; a shilling each to Hester, Martha and Mary; the same amount plus a prayer book to Hannah; to Penelope, the youngest, £10; to Sarah, a paddock plus an orchard in Bitton, (situate next to Mr Samuel Bush) and wearing apparel; to Elizabeth, two messuages and all appurtenances belonging, one at the sign of The Bell, in Bitton where Mary Bryant lived and the other occupied by John Naish, blacksmith, his tenant since 1717. Lawrence Bush, Robert Bryant and Samuel Tippet were the witnesses and Elizabeth, who was executrix, proved the will a month later, on 17th February. Elizabeth had been married to Maurice Britton in 1721 and Hannah to Saul Brayne in 1729. Curiously Josias did not state their married names. Penelope, who like the others seems to have remained single, was baptised at Bitton in 1697, the daughter of Josias and Elizabeth.

Our forebear Nancy, the youngest child of David Robbins and his wife Ann Jones was christened at Keynsham Church in 1767. David was a millwright by trade; in 1769 was shown in the vestry minutes as an '*Intruder into Keynsham*'. Nancy was named after her mother, Ann, likewise known as Nancy, who died aged 92 in 1822, setting a tradition of longevity amongst Robbins/Fray spouses. Nancy Fray as she became was the great granddaughter of the first Josias Robbins and his wife Elizabeth Holbin. Jonathon Robbins, the brother of Josias junior, the clockmaker, was the first in a line of three Jonathans, Nancy's grandfather, uncle and brother. They were all much beloved, or perhaps she just liked the name, for she gave it to a fourth Jonathan, her eldest son and third child, Jonathan Fray. The name David would also be preserved in the Fray family in future generations.

²³ GRO D1844/C17, 1719-30

²⁴ Keynsham Past & Present by Tony & Freddie Lewis, 1987, pps21, 24

George and Nancy's children

Ruth, George and Nancy's eldest child was born in January 1795. Leah, their second daughter, was buried three weeks short of her second birthday on 30th March 1798, described '*an infant*'. Two sons, Jonathan and his brother Matthew were baptised together on the 7th July 1799. In 1801, Matthew, also '*an infant*' was taken ill with small pox and was buried aged 5 months on the 7th December. Ruth, almost seven, caught the disease from her baby brother and was buried ten days later. George and Nancy went on to have two more children, Maria in 1804, afterwards Mrs Thomas Evans and George in 1805 of whom nothing else is known.

In July 1814, '*The Company*' where nearly all of them worked held a thanksgiving banquet to celebrate the capitulation of France and the end of the long war. About a thousand people, employees with their wives and children from the Company's outlets at Baptist Mills, Warmley and Keynsham were treated to traditional roast beef and plum pudding '*and a plentiful supply of good old stingo*', a strong ale. The people '*separated perfectly satisfied with the liberality of their worthy benefactors.*' Perhaps the Frays drank to the health and safe return of Luke the soldier, away in Canada? Alas, celebrations were premature. Napoleon lived to fight another day at Waterloo the next year.²⁵

Jonathan Fray, a wiredrawer like his father, was married at Temple Church, Bristol on 4th December 1819 to Jane, the daughter of a labourer, William Faux and his second wife Anne Clee or Clea. Only a transcript of the entry survives as Temple was one of the Bristol churches bombed in the blitz of 1941. I cannot say whether Jonathan was able to sign the register, but I very much doubt it. Jane's parents, William and Anne who were married at Keynsham on the 26th December 1791, both marked the register in lieu of signatures, the groom with a cross, the bride with a squiggle. Anne's ancestry has totally defeated me. She told the 1841 census man that she was born '*in this county*', that is to say, in Somerset, but her surname, Clea hardly exists anywhere, and as Clee only seldom in Worcestershire and Shropshire. Anne was buried, aged 80, on 11th April 1847; if only she could have hung on a few more years the 1851 census may have solved the mystery of her birthplace. The Faux children, including Jane, had a fondness for Temple with its famous leaning tower, which had no particular connection with Keynsham that I am aware of apart from being on the road between Bristol and Bath. Several of the Faux clan married each other there: James the son of Anthony and Sarah Faux married Martha Faux, Jane's sister in 1818. Mark, James's brother, married another of Jane's sisters, Mary in 1830. William, Jane's brother in 1827, married outside the family, Mary Lacey, as did Virtue, another sister, who married Jacob Williams in 1829.

The Faux family were originally proprietors of a paper mill in Keynsham and can be traced back to 1670 when Nicholas Faux married Susanna Lawrence. The couple produced ten or

²⁵ Bristol Mirror, 16.7.1814

eleven children, 1671-1691. Another family member, Benjamin, a paper maker of Saltford married Rachel Aylliffe of Bitton at Bedminster in 1700.

Certain 19th century members of the Faux family were notorious, and not only in Keynsham. In March 1820 several of them came up for trial in Exeter at the Devonshire Assizes. A brief newspaper report states that *'John Faux [is] convicted and left for execution; George Faux and Samuel Brimble, transported for life; Samuel Faux, William Sweet and Daniel Sweet, transported for fourteen years for horse stealing and passing forged notes. They are 'a notorious gang who came from Keynsham, taken in Plymouth. Praise [is due] for the spirited exertions of Mr Palmer, surgeon of that place, in apprehending the above gang.'*²⁶

John Faux²⁷, who used the alias 'John Gregory' and Samuel Faux, were baptised at Keynsham on the same day, 24th October 1779, along with their apparently untainted brother Joseph, the sons of a previous William and Ann, nee Rumsey. It is probable that they were our Jane Faux's uncles, whereas George was her silly young brother, aged twenty who had been led astray by his elders. Any hint of raffishness, a bit of stand and deliver on the Bath Road, a few horses stolen from here and there, is soon dispelled. Keynsham residents were heartily sick of them and were delighted at the guilty verdicts, with death for John Faux in particular: they wrote to the Home Secretary urging that his capital sentence should not be reduced and any petition for clemency ignored.

The plea fell upon deaf ears and John's death sentence was commuted to transportation for fourteen years. He was not finished though and from the Hulks wrote several aggressive letters threatening extreme violence if ever he got the chance *'against the man who brought the prosecution'*²⁸ who I assume is Mr Palmer. He arrived in Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) on 3rd September 1820, along with Samuel Brimble, whose life sentence had also been reduced to fourteen years, being two out of the 160 convicts transported via the 'Juliana'. Daniel Sweet also arrived on 3rd September, among the 159 convicts aboard the 'Hebe'. No mention is made of the others who may have died in the prison Hulks when awaiting transport or during the long voyage.

Keynsham and especially Mr Thomas Palmer, the surgeon, was glad to see the back of the gang. The Palmer family had been regularly targeted by horse thieves, at least since 1802 when they offered twenty guineas as a reward for the apprehension of those who had taken a brown gelding and a bay pony.²⁹ Thomas was even then zealous in seeking out the perpetrators. In 1815 he was lavishly praised for capturing several of a gang (*'from that sink*

²⁶ Felix Farley's Bristol Journal, 1.4.1820, Bristol Mirror 27.3.1820

²⁷ Others may come to a different conclusion. John may just as well be the son of Christian Faux, baptised Keynsham, 3.4.1797

²⁸ According to an on-line poster, who asks £35 for the original information: 'The tone of the second letter is extremely aggressive.....not for the faint hearted'. Ref. UCE1832. For the convict lists, Google: 'Convict transportation registers www.beyondtheseas.co.uk/one.search.slq.qld.au/primo

²⁹ Salisbury & Winchester Journal, 8.11.1808.

*of iniquity, Cock Road!*³⁰) as far away as Liverpool. He had once again lost two horses, though the total number taken from other gentry in the neighbourhood was thirty, valued at £700.³¹ In 1823, this one man police force was at work again, when John Taylor, a twenty four year old Nottingham man, was taken for a burglary at Woolverton, Wiltshire, and *'by his own confession of another at the house of Mr Palmer of Keynsham.'* A large reward had been offered. Perhaps horses were one thing and burglary another, for Taylor was to hang and this time the sentence stood. Even up to a few hours before his execution Taylor *'cherished a hope of escape when he wrenched a bolt from the door of his cell during the temporary absence of the person employed to watch him and then ineffectually tried to force an iron gate leading to the debtors' rooms in the hope of crossing the walls.'*³² He was overpowered and brought to execution at the New Drop, Ilchester on 1st September 1823.

At this time there were over 200 capital crimes on the statute book, several of the most bizarre being 'impersonating a Chelsea Pensioner', 'being out at night with a blackened face' and 'being in the company of gipsies for a month'. There seems little to choose between Taylor and Faux and as another 'hanging offence' was 'writing a threatening letter', thus John Faux was especially lucky. As Mr Bumble said *"The law is a ass – a idiot."*

Thomas Palmer and his wife, the former Miss Martha Whittuck of Hanham, were part of the Keynsham hierarchy. The Whittucks were proprietors of coalmines in Bitton and sometime employers of the Pillinger family.

On 21st September 1823, there was a mass christening in Keynsham of twenty children, among them, George and Charles, the sons of Jonathan Fray, labourer and his wife Jane, but the vicar who had been on a general round up, was only just getting into his stride. On the 28th of the month he christened another twelve and on the 29th, a further twenty. The souls of Keynsham's infant population now having been satisfactorily saved, christenings then settled down in a more sensible fashion restricted to one or two new-borns at a time.

On the 8th August 1824, Henry Fray, Jonathan and Jane's next son was christened, and by coincidence, just two spaces away in the register, Martha, the daughter of George Reed, a battery man, and his wife Sarah was recorded. In the fullness of time Martha would become Henry Fray's sister-in-law. Jonathan and Jane's next baby was Sarah, born in 1828, who sadly died aged 2 years, nine months and was buried on 5th September 1830. A son, John was born about 1831, but his christening was overlooked in the wake of the grief for the little girl.

³⁰ Details of the CR Gang in Part 1

³¹ Bristol Mirror 11.2.1815

³² 4.9.1823, Exeter Flying Post; 8.9.1823, Salisbury & Winchester J.

BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of <u>Keynsham</u> in the County of <u>Somerset</u> in the Year 182 <u>4</u>						
When Baptized.	Child's Christian Name.	Parents Name.		Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
		Christian.	Surname.			
1824. Aug 5 No. 513.	Henry	Jonathan	Frey	Keynsham	Wine-looker	J. C. Allen
		Jane				
17 No. 514.	William Ball	Joseph Drew	Keynsham	Solicitor	J. Locking	
		Susanah				
29 No. 515.	Martha	George Reed	Keynsham	Battery- man	Hocking	
		Sarah				
Sept. 12 No. 516.	Joseph	James Bell	Keynsham	Cotton Printer	J. Mair	
		Susanah				

There was more tragedy in 1832 when young George died aged ten. He was buried on 27th September 1832 and Jane, who was pregnant must have longed for another boy to take his place. As the answer to her prayers, George the second duly followed, baptised on 31st January, 1833, then came Ann in 1835 and David in 1839.

The Birmingham Connection

In June 1840, Charles, Jonathan and Jane's eldest child married Emma Bryant at Temple Church, Bristol. They had eleven children in all, the first six born in Keynsham or at Bristol and the remaining five after their departure for Birmingham. Four of the children died in infancy. Charles had many occupations: wiredrawer, labourer, railwayman, warehouseman, railway inspector and jobbing labourer. He did not stay in any job for long and following his move to the Midlands with his family, each child's birth certificate shows a different address. Charles was the great-grandfather of George Croxall Fray who gave a lecture concerning his Fray family history research at Keynsham Local History Society on 16th April 1970. I never met George, as I never heard of him until after his death (1972). He left a huge number of papers, certificates and notes with the Keynsham Local History Society with copies to be distributed among family members, but instead of being thrilled with this unexpected cache, it had the opposite effect. For years I resisted the lure of the Frays and their offshoots, believing "George had already done it.....".....Yawn..... Naturally, when I finally got round to it, I found it fascinating, even though I disagreed with a few of George's conclusions. Also there was much more I could add.

George Croxall implies that Charles was a failure in life. In 1861, he seems settled, working in Birmingham as an inspector of railway fittings, aged 41, living at Well Street, with his wife and five children plus a lodger, William Carpenter, a 19 year old labourer, who was born in his old home town of Keynsham. In 1871, Charles is nowhere to be found, whereas his wife Emma is named as the head of her household at 46 Hurst Street, calling herself 'a widow'. The surviving children, living with her are Emma, 22, a sewing machine worker, Joseph, 16, a gold seal maker, George, 15 a base metal worker, (who would later emigrate to Australia

where there are Fray descendants), Charles, 13, a house painter, Sarah, 11 and Mary, both scholars.

Emma Fray, nee Bryant, died in Birmingham at the age of 53. An inquest on 30th December 1873 told a very sad story. She had been going to see her husband, the only time he is mentioned in the newspaper report and showing that she had stated she was a widow to 'keep up appearances'. They had obviously separated and perhaps she was attempting a reconciliation though this must have been unsuccessful. The inquest heard that she had been in ill health for some time, becoming increasingly despondent. On Christmas Eve she threatened suicide by drinking laudanum but had been dissuaded by her children. In the early hours of Christmas Day she slipped away and was found by her daughters wandering near the canal. They brought her home but later that week she went missing again and her body was found in the river near the Icknield Bridge. The coroner's verdict was: 'suicide in a state of insanity by drowning'.

Charles was still very much alive and by 1881 was living as a general labourer, a widower, in lodgings back in Keynsham. In 1891 and 1901, he had returned to Birmingham, living in various lodging houses, working as a labourer, until his death aged 87 in 1907.

In 1881, Charles and Emma's son Joseph, who was 29, was living with his spinster sister Emma. Joseph states that he is single man, yet he had been married on 1st May 1876 to a woman called Mary Jane Henningham, aged 24, at Handsworth, the daughter of Joseph Henningham, a retired brassfounder. Joseph the bridegroom described himself as 'a goldsmith, the son of Charles Fray, warehouseman.' Mary Jane gave birth to a son, Ernest Anderson on 19th June. Unusually, the information on the birth certificate contains only the mother's name, 'Mary Jane Fray, formerly Henningham, jeweller's polisher'. Clearly there had been great drama in the intervening six weeks between marriage and birth. George Croxall was shocked by this revelation, never having heard the least whisper of scandal concerning his 'pillar of Victorian rectitude' grandfather; he came to the conclusion that Joseph refused to believe that he was the baby's father. The baby died aged seven months of bronchitis and convulsions on the 12th March 1877 at Langford Place, Outwood, Wrenthorpe in faraway Yorkshire, named as the son of Mary Janey (sic) Fray, of no occupation. The information on the certificate came from Samuel Anderson, of the same address. George Croxall believed that in view of the boy's name, Samuel was little Ernest's father. Outwood is a former pit village outside Wakefield, within the famous 'Rhubarb Triangle'. No doubt this was a sad tale, with apparent echoes of Sergeant Troy and Fanny Robin. What did it all mean? In my mind Joseph was the villain on the piece, especially when he married again on 1st March 1884, at Ladywood, and described himself 'a widower'.

It never pays to make assumptions in family history, and cousin Dorothy Acford suddenly remembered that she had seen a note of a divorce between Joseph and Mary Jane. Suddenly all was revealed by a newspaper report in the Worcester Chronicle of 8th May 1880:

AN ARTFUL WOMAN

'In the Divorce Division of the Court of Justice yesterday the suit of Fray v. Fray with the husband's petition for dissolution on the grounds of the wife's adultery with the co-respondent, John Taylor was investigated. Mr Bayford appeared for the petitioner and opening the case stated that the respondents had been married on 1st June 1876 at Handsworth, Staffordshire. The petitioner had been the victim of a very cruel fraud. His wife told him she was ill and that her doctor had told her she should be married as soon as possible and the petitioner married her. Immediately after his suspicions were aroused and he called in a doctor to see what was the matter with her. He (the doctor) told the petitioner that his wife was enceinte. The parties separated, the wife going to her relations. The child was born about six weeks after the marriage and was owned by the co-respondent as his child. The petitioner printed a number of handbills accusing the co-respondent of seducing his wife. The co-respondent brought an action for libel which was not finally proceeded with. Costs in this connection nearly ruined the petitioner, a working goldsmith. His wife left her parents in the month of November and went to live with the co-respondent, John Taylor by whom she has since had a child. When served with a copy of the citation she said she had been expecting it a long time. Sir James Hannon granted a decree nisi with costs.'

So Joseph was gullible though not culpable. There are still unanswered questions. Why did he wait so long to bring his suit? Why was the baby's death not mentioned? Who was Samuel Anderson? Did Mary Jane marry John Taylor? Did she die before Joseph married again in 1884?

His new bride was Annie Emma Moorhouse the eldest of the eight children of William Moorhouse and his wife Emma. In 1881 William is 'an inspector in the water department' and on the marriage certificate, 'a clerk'. Their servant-less household does not seem to convey the well-off family of a master builder which George Croxall envisages was responsible for setting Joseph on his feet. William Moorhouse was dead by 1891 and Emma, a widow, continued to live in Birmingham with several of her children.

By 1891, Joseph, 39, 'a manufacturing jeweller' and Annie Emma, 30, had two children, Bernard George, aged 3, and one month old John Moorhouse and were in Albion Street, Birmingham, where they, like each of their neighbours, had an apparently obligatory young female servant, which presumably denoted their up and coming status much as those in the 1950s boasted a washing machine! By 1901, Joseph, 'manufacturing jeweller, masonic & medals' had moved to posh Sutton Coldfield and the number of servants had risen to two, despite only young John being at home with his father. Bernard had been packed off to boarding school, one of ten pupils of John C. Mainwaring (*Don't tell 'im, Pike*) at Springfield House, Hounslow in London. Annie, aged 40, was apparently on holiday at the Grand Spa Hotel, Bristol with her young son, Stanley, aged two, whose birth was registered at Aston in 1898. Little Stanley died young. Out of Joseph and Annie's five children, only Bernard and John survived childhood. Annie died aged 45 in September 1906. Joseph married for the

third time, Ellen Emma Keogh, at Fylde, in Lancashire in 1908. In 1911 they were living at Anchorage Road, Sutton Coldfield, Joseph aged 59, and Ellen Emma, 44, with John M. aged 20, and a servant. Ellen Emma gives her birthplace as 'Bristol' and in 1881 was living at Ashley Road, a scholar of 14, the daughter of an Irish brushmaker. True to form with this branch of the family, she has managed to keep her life from then until her marriage, a secret. There may be a clue in that George Croxall calls her 'Ellen Wright'. Joseph died in 1939 aged 87.

Bernard Fray, now 23, having survived boarding school, was married to Vere Croxall by 1911, and working for his father in the business. George Croxall, their only child, was born in 1913. Bernard assumed control of the company, (Joseph Fray Ltd) whilst still in his twenties, and through hard work doubled the firm's output, "*Joseph having taken to globe-trotting and golf by this time,*" George told his Keynsham congregation. Bernard added silver sports trophies, cups and civic regalia to the lines produced with sales divided equally between jewellery and the motor trade: the company became famous for its enamelled badges for car radiators, which are still avidly collected by enthusiasts. During both World Wars, the factory was engaged with munitions. Bernard attempted to enlist without success but was commissioned in the Territorial Army, first in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and then the RASC. He was invalided out in 1939 with the rank of Lt. Colonel. He died aged 68, on 31st January 1956 whilst on a cruise aboard the RMS 'Andes'. His death is recorded 'at sea'. His bereaved widow, Vere Croxall Beddow Fray of Staffordshire apparently fell into despondency and died on 9th September 1958 of 'acute cardiac failure and alcoholism' aged 71.

After school at Malvern College, George Croxall Fray joined the family firm, "*learning my trade at the factory bench*". Like his father, he was commissioned into the T.A. in which he served for twenty two years, other than (unspecified) war time postings. He married his wife Nancy Hughes in 1945. He succeeded his father as Chairman and Managing Director after Bernard's death in 1956, and in 1958, sold the jewellery side of the business, the 'one-off' lines being incompatible with the mass production of requirements for the motor trade. He expanded into the anodising of aluminium ornamentation, otherwise metal trim for sundry articles, domestic and industrial. He was justly very proud of the unbroken chain of two hundred and fifty years of family metal workers from the time of the earliest 'Dutch' immigrants to Bristol and Keynsham up to the time the firm of Joseph Fray Ltd ceased production in 1971.

George Croxall Fray died in 1972, and was survived by his wife and two sons, Martyn and Paul.

Back in Keynsham.....

Meanwhile in Keynsham, we still kept plodding on, most of our Fray men working in the brass trade, though others laboured on their own account as blacksmiths, but all of them

were descended from John and Jane. But changes were afoot. Though the guarantee by the Company for the most part saved the brass workers from going cap in hand to the vestry for subsistence, for many others this was the reality of life. Country-wide it was deemed that matters had got so far out of hand, 'the Poor being with us always' that as usual *Something had to Done*. That 'something' was the setting up of an Enquiry into the Poor Law which had been in existence for centuries. The Ratepayers had been objecting for years to paying out funds for these layabouts. No change there. So the idea was mooted that instead of paupers being paid a pittance at the church door, why not round them all up to live altogether in one place? Furthermore, why not make the place so grim that nobody would want to go there! Problem solved!

There had long been a Poor House in Keynsham, but prior to the Poor Law Commissioners' Report of 1834 there had only been six people resident there, presumably because they were too feeble to walk to the Vestry for their allowance. Under the new system Keynsham was selected as a suitable venue for a Union Workhouse to cater for the whole district, not only Keynsham itself, but the villages of Brislington, Burnett, Compton Dando, Corston, Kelston, Marksbury, Newton St Loe, North Stoke, Priston, Queen Charlton, Saltford, Stanton Prior, Whitchurch in Somerset and Bitton, Hanham, Mangotsfield, Oldland and Siston in Gloucestershire, to which Hanham Abbots and Kingswood were added later. The Keynsham Poor Law Union, serving a population of about 21,000 souls formally came into being on 29th March 1836, and was overseen by an elected Board of twenty six Guardians. The Workhouse building itself was completed in 1837.

The system was devised to end all out-door relief for the able-bodied and the deterrent aspect was eagerly adopted, to ensure that only the most desperate would seek admission. If a man who was deemed fit enough to work applied for entry then his whole family would have to come in with him. The surroundings were deliberately cheerless, husbands being separated from their wives and parents parted from their children. Monotonous food was provided (the Guardians expected to make a profit and contracts were eagerly sought by suppliers) along with a drab uniform. The work was back breaking, like the cracking of rocks, or the picking apart of old ropes, known as oakum. Discipline was harsh. However, Workhouses were not prisons: inmates could come and go at will and often did so, leaving when outside work was available and returning when employment dried up. Others spent their whole lives in the Union House which in time became the only option for those with no prospect of employment: the old, the sick, the disabled, the mentally impaired, single mothers with their children, orphans. The brass workers must have been thankful for the degree of protection afforded them by the Company, but with the vagaries of trade, they were aware they were only a whisker away from sharing the same fate as the rest of the local poor. The prospect of the Workhouse did more than discourage, it inspired dread and particularly so in the mind of my great-great-grandfather, the young Henry Fray.

A census of the population of England and Wales had been held in 1831, but the results, based upon numbers in each household which had been collected on individual forms were muddled. Ten years later in 1841, enumerators wrote the information into a book, an improvement on the loose sheets of paper, but the thinking was still flawed. Instead of the simple question *"Where were you born?"* to which the answer might be Keynsham or Bitton or Timbuktu, the question was *"Were you born in this County?"* The answer then was "Y" for Yes, "N" for No. Others from elsewhere, i.e., Ireland were "I", Scotland "S" and the Timbuktu crowd, "F" for 'foreign parts'. No relationship was specified between the head of the house and the other occupants within the group and ages were reckoned to the nearest five years, supposedly counting upwards, except in the cases of children which were given their correct age, as far as the parents knew it. The whole enterprise, though better than nothing, was crack-brained and caused enormous confusion.

In 1841, at Keynsham, Nancy Fray, shown formally as 'Ann', was 'aged 70' and 'of independent means'. She had been widowed the year before, when her husband George died aged sixty nine. Living with her was Maria Fray, '35' and Edwin Fray, a boy of eight along with Thomas Evans, '25', a wire drawer.

With Charles and Emma married and perhaps already planning to depart for the Midlands, Jonathan and Jane still had five children living at home, Henry, John, George and David. Nearby, dwelt the aged grandmother, Jemima Fray, with her daughter Ann Thomas, who eked out an existence for them both working as a needlewoman. It is doubtful that the Company's guarantee extended to the widowed daughter of an employee. The alternative was the Workhouse. Far from being the gentle sewing of a fine seam, this was the trade which inspired Thomas Hood's angry poem of 1843, 'The Song of the Shirt' in which he drew attention to the sufferings of a London widow. Mrs Biddell sewed trousers and shirts at home in wretched conditions using materials supplied by her employer, for which she was forced to pay a £2 deposit. Such women often spent seven days a week labouring in inhuman conditions, barely surviving and often going blind through stitching long hours by candlelight.

*With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread –
Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang 'The Song of the Shirt!'*

Jonathan and Jane's last child, a son, Sidney, was born in June 1843 and died aged ten months the following 22nd April, of Marasmus, which I was shocked to find is acute

malnutrition. Perhaps the baby failed to suck, perhaps Jane's milk was meagre and of poor quality or the whole family was on the breadline. Perhaps..... Perhaps.....

On 29th November 1846, Henry Fray, aged 22, married Harriet Reed at St Philip and St Jacob, Bristol. Harriet, who was a year or so younger, was the daughter of George and Sarah Reed and the sister of Martha Reed, the girl named in the parish register of baptisms in 1824, two spaces away from Henry. It was an urgent match with the bride more than seven months pregnant. Henry described himself as a labourer, of full age, the son of a wire drawer and Harriet as the daughter of a brass maker. On the marriage lines the names of both Henry and his father Jonathan are given as 'Fry'. Henry could not query the spelling of his name, for unlike his "Dutch" forebears he could not write. Both he and his bride marked with a cross. By 22nd January 1847, the couple were back in Keynsham for the birth of their daughter, Lavinia, who would become my great grandmother.

Lavinia was named after Harriet's aunt, Lavinia Read and we can see from the following how a relatively unusual name can be perpetuated within a family:

John Read/Reed = Martha Ollis m. Keynsham 25.9.1791		

Lavinia Read bp 1791	George Reed = Sarah bp 1796	others

others	Harriet Reed = Henry Fray bp 1826	

others	Lavinia Fray = Thomas Pillinger b. 1847	

Others	Lavinia Pillinger 1884-1909	

Crimes against the Company appear to have been relatively rare or seldom reported. Apart from a large haul of brass, two hundredweight, from one of the melting houses at Baptist Mills in 1830³³ for which nobody seems to have been apprehended, there were infrequent minor thefts, a shovel, a tea kettle, but one case which appeared is rendered more interesting in that the culprit had worked all his life for the Company, as had his father and grandfather before him. Moreover, he was one of those with a 'Dutch' name, Crinks (otherwise Krinks or Krintz). In 1848, a sharp-eyed Bristol policeman named Stephens spotted a display of 'new brass' in a shop belonging to a Mr Rose of West Street, Old Market and further enquiries led him to a Mr Reynolds of Philip Street. Reynolds said he had bought the brass off a woman, and could point her out to the constable who duly accompanied him

³³ Bristol Mirror 18.12.1830

to Keynsham. Here Jane Crinks was identified. Pc Stephens told her she had better be careful as she was under arrest for felony, whereupon her husband Charles said it was his fault, he had committed the theft and passed the metal to his wife to sell. Charles said Reynolds came to Keynsham two or three times a week with bread and one day, he got down from his cart and asked:

"How is trade?"

"Very slack," Crinks replied.

Reynolds pointed towards the Mills. *"Have you any pancakes down there?"* meaning cakes of copper.

"No."

Reynolds: *"Well have you got some brass?"*

"It is a long lane that has no turning," said Crinks, mournfully, whereupon he was induced to steal the brass.³⁴

Charles and Jane Crinks were remanded in custody and presumably served time in prison. In 1851 they and their five children had left Keynsham for St Philip's in Bristol. Charles who was 42, had lost his job of course, and was working as a labourer at a market garden. The Company had given a statement that they were particularly interested in finding the receivers of stolen goods who were the real villains.

The taking of a census became a legal fixture for each decade and has remained so ever since except for 1941 at the height of the Second World War. That for 1851 was much more sensible than that of 1841. It shows the address, the head of the house, the subordinate members listed below, with their relationship to the Head: wife, son, sister, lodger and so on. Though many people did not know precisely how old they were, most made a reasonable guess. They were asked their occupation too and also *"Where were you born?"* Sometimes the answer was surprising. Although the vast majority in Keynsham were locally born and bred or had come in from the neighbouring villages, some were from farther afield, Leicester, Warwickshire, Norfolk, London, Suffolk, Cornwall; four were born in Ireland, one in Wales; the birthplaces of several children of army officers revealed the details of their fathers' postings: Mauritius, Jamaica, Canada; the Raj was represented by Bombay, Gujurat and other illegible places in the East Indies; one soul, a lady visitor had been born in New South Wales! All of them, no doubt had fascinating stories to tell. None of the paupers in the Workhouse had a familiar 'Dutch' name; nor were any of them brass mill labourers. Perhaps there was still a degree of protection from The Company and work was available as long as the demand for brass goods continued and they kept their heads down.

³⁴ Bristol Mercury 11.11.1848

In this census of 1851, Henry and Harriet Fray's daughter Lavinia was four years old and they now had two more children, Martha, two, and Sidney aged four months. The two little girls were proudly recorded as 'scholars'; perhaps they attended a Dame school – Anna Wise, a 64 years old widow styled herself 'schoolmistress' in the census. Henry's brothers, John, 17, George, 15 and David, 12, were all still at home with their parents; Jonathan their father, was still working as a wire drawer and the boys were labourers at the brass mill.

Next door to Henry and his family, the widowed Nancy, (still shown as Ann) aged 83, head of her household, was keeping up standards as 'a proprietor of houses', the remains of a legacy from her Robbins forebears perhaps. Maria, now identified as her daughter was still living with her, as 'Maria Evans' the wife in name but without certificate of Tom Evans, the former lodger who was ten years her junior. He came from along the river at Saltford and was a labourer at the brass works. The two children of the household, Nancy's grandchildren, were Sarah Evans, aged six and 'Edward Fray' aged 18, the latter born at Bath, who was likewise a labourer at the mills. He was in fact Edwin Henry the son of Charles and Love Fray, christened at Keynsham in 1833 who would marry Hester Smith at St Mary Redcliffe in Bristol in 1853, with the marriage certificate confirming his father as Charles Fray, a carpenter. Charles was a widower when he married Love Harvey at St Mary's, Bathwick in 1832, his presumed first marriage to Elizabeth Clemant having taken place at Walcot in 1829. Charles died aged 31 and is stated as being 'from Bath' when he was buried at St John the Baptist, Keynsham on 26th March 1836. I have found no burial records for either Elizabeth or Love, his two wives. It seems that when he died, Nancy, his mother, stepped into the breach and brought up his orphaned three year old son. Though no baptismal record has been found for Charles, it follows that if Edwin (alias Edward) is Nancy's grandson, then Charles must be her son.

Nancy died on 23rd August 1852, 'aged 85, widow of George Fray, wiredrawer', of 'decay of nature'. Present at her death bed was her faithful daughter, Maria Evans.

Edwin writes his Life Story

Nancy's grandson, Edwin Fray was an amazing scribe who wrote his life story when in his 88th year having had, by his own account, only six months schooling. Though there are still unanswered questions, I believe Jonathan and Edwin were uncle and nephew, a discovery which gave me enormous pleasure.

This is Edwin Fray's account of his life, written in 1920-21, in his own words and spelling though I have occasionally amended the punctuation:

I am now starting on a short history of my early life of what I remember about the District of Keynsham where I worked and what I did, also some of the chief events that took place at which I was present. Born in the year 1833, I started to work at the Harford & Bristol Brass Co at the age of 9 years working for the said firm 66 years. I might say that before starting

in life at the Brass Mills I well remember the making of the Great Western Railway through Keynsham and how the inhabitants did watch & wonder, what kind of thing it was going to be; the pile driving for the Bridge over the River Chew was very interesting and how the Foreman did say "Give it another tap!" trying the joints with the blade of his knife when fixing the large stones in place. Anyone that will trouble to take notice of the Bridges will see the good work of their construction when getting out at the track where the station stands. Human skeletons were brought to light and my grandfather kept one of the skulls³⁵ for several years; eventually the local Doctor took it away with him as a souvenir.

The Town at this period about the year 1840. My first experience of factory life was at the tube section. The Manager at that time Mr Mortimer, enquiring of me "if I could try, sir"³⁶. About thirty men were employed in the Brass & Copper tube making and one a Birmingham man James Gossage by name. With this man I started in the tube brazing. The Harford Co. supplied customers in various towns, among them the Avon Side Engineers works, Hill's shipbuilders at Hotwells, Messrs Adlam & Llewellyn. Then from tube making to the brass and copper wire making; at this period coakes were not obtainable so the furnaces were heated by a kind of bracken supplied by the surrounding farmers, damped down with small coal [which] when burnt through created the heat to melt the different metals of which brass is made: copper spelter and tin. Different mixtures and grades were made, Red-Wire, Pale-Wire and Common Yellow-Wire. The Red and Pale being used for weaving purposes, was sent away "soft" to Christys & McFarlanes at Glasgow to be drawn smaller. At this time the moulds were two large stones plastered around the sides to keep the molten metal when cold into a long solid slab, then it was rolled down between the rolls, cold between each process of the rolling. It was annealed to make it soft so that the metal would sink after being rolled to the desired size, about 12 or 14 wire gauge, about 3 inches wide. It was cut by steel blades into 18 strings [and] from now on it is wire. After being rolled between a small pair of rolls with a small half round groove which made all the strings practically round [it was] then annealed and pickled with a mixture of vitriol and water. [Then] it was ready for the wire-drawer which set the steel plates to the gradual smaller size which was required to show how valuable the pins were which at this time were made. Well to do people used to give their wives money once a year to buy pins hence the word 'pin-money'. The Harford Co. undertook to supply a London firm with a quantity of pin wire to start making rolled head pins and [the] Firm in question failed, the Harford Co losing about £1,000 pounds, a lot of money in those days. From the ore to the finished article it took about 50 or 60 process[es] and female labour was used at several of them. Right and left handed Blocks of very ingenious makes 10 inches and 6 inches and one man used to look after 3 or 4 at a time drawing his pin wire; also copper wire for piano work and all sorts of different sizes, square, flat, half round. Hannam [Hanham] & Stroud at this time were pin making places, Birmingham amongst other towns being supplied with the wire. The Harford Co. is a very old firm established about the year 1703 when Birmingham was green fields, the number of employees being about 250. Quite a lot of the wire was used for brushmaking and tying down the wine. [? See Portugal later on]. William Veal being one of the wire-drawers. It required a great amount of skill and patience to get the wire [to the] exact sizes required. Another line was African rods made of brass & about ¼ of an inch thick packed in boxes

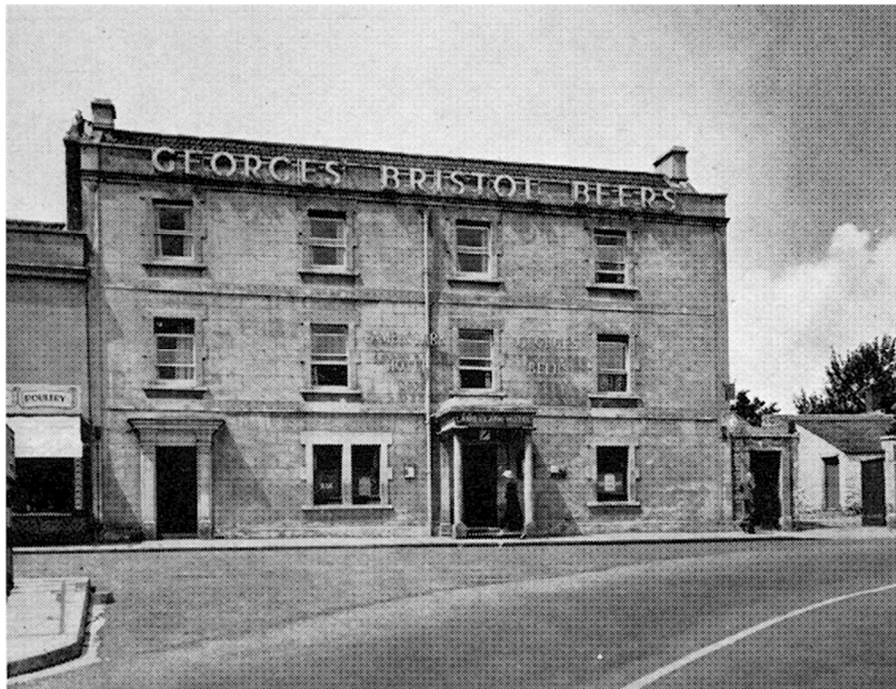
³⁵ George Fray?

³⁶ I think Edwin enquired of his boss, not the other way round!

about 50 lb in a box and sent away “soft”, thousands of tons of this particular line being bartered by merchants in Africa for Ivory, Palm Oil and other costly articles which the great continent of Africa contained. Boats would come and take 50-60 tons at a time to be shipped from Liverpool. Wire was also used to make up the crinoline[s] worn by women. Merchant King of Bristol was a large customer for the African rods, also a shallow pan called “neps”, thousands at a time being ordered, something in shape to our dinner plate, hammered out at the Battery Mill at Saltford then sent over to Keynsham Mill to be turned in the lave which I used to do, some of them 40 inches wide. These neps were used to catch the sea water, then exposing to the sun left the salt behind. Then a large trade was done in Lisbon for the wine trade of Pourtugal.....[LINE lost at bottom of page].....Kettles buckets of brass and boilers, one of which I have now, [which has] been in use over 70 years. Some of the buckets, small size, being sent to Africa and used by the natives to catch the oil from the Palm Trees; Domes for the locomotives. Another line was strip metal used by ship builders to protect the wooden bottoms and sides of the ship. This metal was called Muntz Yellow Metal and I might here mention that the Muntz Firm of Birmingham had took out patent rights to manufacture this particular grade of metal.³⁷ They found out that the Harford Co. were infringing their patent so took an action in court to recover damages and stop the Harford Co. from producing these sheets. They [Harford’s] took the day as their mode of manufacturing the article was quite different to Muntz’s way: Harford rolling it down cold and Muntz, hot. The Foreman which came to Keynsham with the Manager of Muntz stopping at Keynsham Mills several weeks, including the cast iron moulds which have been in use ever since, he being well paid, about 50£ and wages beside, to get out patterns for the moulds, sometimes as many as 30 casters being working at once, 21 Battery Mills also being in use. The railway now being in working order..... [missing words]..... spelter from Swansea was being brought by rail and unloaded by the Bridge at the entrance to the works. All power was supplied by the river Avon too, and 7 or 8 large Water Wheels were used to drive the machinery. Very often high floods would put a stop to the factory douting the ovens and completely covering the machinery. This is a serious time but thoughtlessly enjoyed by the younger people. Machinery have now been erected driven by steam on higher ground but several of the lines of trade have gone and Keynsham Mills are not what they were 70 or 80 years ago. At different times during my life the Old Town of Keynsham have harboured various trades: candle making at the corner of Temple Street and High Street; also three places carrying on tanning down past the Crown public house by the Chew Bridge; malting where the Liberal Club stands and where the ten houses stand in Dragon’s Hill; also Logwood Mills at Chewton, which was burned down and never rebuilt; the same kind of work being carried on by Mr Thomas by Chew Cottages. This place in turn have been a flour mill and cement place but has been burned down which was not in my time, [that] was in the old coaching days and often 20 or 30 coaches would be through in one day The Mail was drawn by four Greys and a Man standing behind sounding a Bugle for the mails to be ready. Horses

³⁷ George Frederic Muntz, industrialist and radical politician. He patented the alloy known as Muntz Metal, which was used for the protective sheathing of ships’ hulls. By the mid-1840s Muntz’s company was producing some 4,000 tons a year. The Muntz family is ‘an institution’ in Birmingham.

were sometimes changed at the Lamb & Lark Hotel. Goods were carried by coach drawn by six horses. The Post Office at the time being where the Elmgrove Hotel stands, one delivery a day and kept by one of the Buglers from the Mail Coach. It was carried on by another place in the High Street before being shifted to the present position. Now there is three deliveries a day a day, about 12 servants, beside Telegraph, Money Orders, and quite up to date in Post Office Works. Picture House have been tried but not successful. Electric Light have been adopted in the public streets. Now I must say a few words about our grand old church. Mr Robinson was the Minister and he got together by Public Subscription £2,000 to bring the Grand Old Church into a better state. A new roof was put on, seats were remodled and made to face the east, the lighting arrangements were improved, from candles to gas, the Brass tubing being made at the mill and gave by the Firm. My son, Charles, John Brookman and myself made them giving our service free and fitted up by Adlams of Bristol. Gas at this time being about used genarly.



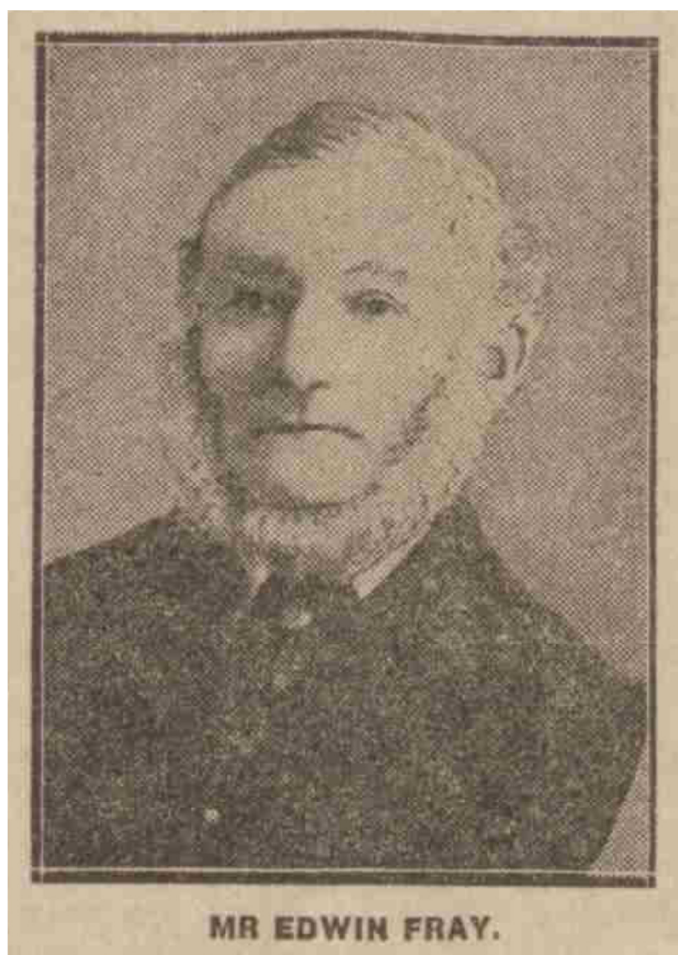
**The Lamb & Lark
Hotel, now
demolished**

Electric Light coming later from a Generating Power House erected close to the Church. The Church Tower was struck by lightning about 1604 [and] was rebuilt by public subscription after a proclamation by the king. The original can be seen in the Vestry, A new Chapple was erected at the corner of Dane's Lane, the old one being used as a Boot Factory [and] now used for the manufacturing of motor springs. I remember the launching of the boat Great Britain built at Bristol and the ceremony being graced by the presence of Prince Albert, a song being written to commemorate the occasion a couple of lines which read

I went to Bristol Prince Albert to see
Likewise 'Great Britain' the Pride of the Sea

Then I remember the Clifton Suspension Bridge being built after, often calling that way to watch the process and the day it was finished I went to it. [It] was a grand sight at night being all lit up with thousands of lime lights.

*About the year 1852 [*NB it was 1853-6] the Crimean War took place and it was a very trying time and the weather was severe. Potatoes got frosted very bad and bread was 11 pence per loaf of one lb, meat was 8 pence, butter 14 pence, yet, bacon plenty at 8d per lb. We had an Order of 13 tons of Copper wire for Russia at the same time and had to work day and night to get them done. They were sent to Hull for shipment. Trade got very bad about this time and the cold was so intense that the Water Wheels got frost Bound and the water frozen over that over a 100 of us could get on the ice at once. One of the Crimea Vetrans lived in my house for twelve years, Mr Adlam, he got shot in the eye. When he died a military funeral was accorded to him: a detachment of Voulonteers with a Band and a dozen of old vetrans followed. I also attended the funeral. Never did I recollect seeing so many people on the Hill before. He was buried at Compton Dando. Quite a jolly old man and a good neighbour.³⁸*



Now a few words about the great European War which affected every country under the sun. August 4th 1914 will never be forgotten as on that day war was declared on Germany. People said it would be over in six weeks. Well, the six weeks went on into five years before Germany was beat and every family in England, Ireland, Scotland, & Wales knew what it was to lose a near or distant relative, some families losing 4 or 5 sons. My neighbours had each a son Killed and I had a grandson, William Goodhind, badly wounded, one leg off and the other badly hurt. So terrible was the state of affairs that practically all males under 45 years and over 18 were liable to be called up for military service. Just to show the vastness, a few items

³⁸ James Adlam aged 78 veteran of the Crimea & the Indian Mutiny was buried with full military honours, including a firing party. WDP 9.4.1914. He lived at Bath Road, next door to Edwin in 1911. I have not been able to establish his relationship (if any) to Cecilia Adlam, the wife of David Fray, whose father was also called James.

compiled at this juncture will not be out of place:

Number of men engaged 24,000,000

Cost per second £77.10.0

Cost per minute £4,658.0.0

Cost per hour £279,166.0.0

Cost per day £6,699,000.0.0

National Debt by April 1919 £6,000,000,000 six thousand million pounds

Population 43,000,000 per head £139.10.0d. 5,700 trucks of gold, 10 ton in a truck would pay £78 an acre for all land would build 20,000,000 houses.

Now the cost of living began to go by leaps and bounds: coal 3/- per cwt; 80 years ago good coal could be got for 2½d per cwt. The very best only fetched 6d. Every commodity had increased in value, not only that, but rationed out under a heavy penalty of keeping large stocks in store.

*Of times interesting accounts of metals are in the paper. One such address [was] by Mr C. Walls, Western Daily Press, March 18th 1921, dealing with soap and the different..... [line lost at end of sheet].....way in which the natives of Africa catch the palm oil in small kettles about 6 inches wide now thousands of these were made at the Keynsham Mills, took out by Merchant King. I used to trim them ready for harnesses (?) to be attached by Mr Rider of Bristol Brass. He mentioned in the mining of copper in Cornwall and Calmind [*Calamine] stone from the Mendip Hills for the making of Brass about the year 1705, so you see that would be about the time I mentioned that the Harford and Bristol Brass Company was established. Now Birmingham is the chief town for Brass Wire and Copper Wire, thousands of tons being made every month with all the latest up to date machinery sending wire to all parts of the world and Kirby Beard making the pins, millions every week from wire drawn through diamond, accurate to size oftentimes to the 10,000 part of an inch so that the machine that make the pins do the work to perfection. So much for my short history of the metal Mills of Keynsham, and our old town. I am now in my 88th year of age with only six months of schooling.*

Yours faithfully

Edwin Fray, No. 18, Bath Road, Keynsham

We had a Order of 13 tons of Copper ~~tin~~ 9
for Russia, at the same time, and had
to work day & night to get them done
they were sent to Hull, for shipment
trade got very bad about this time &
the cold was so intense that the
Water wheels got frost Bound and the
~~water~~ frozen over that over a 100 of
us could get on the ice at once
One of the Crimea Veterans lived in my
house for twelve years Mr Adam, he
got shot in the eye, when he died, a
Military Funeral was accorded to him
a detachment of Volunteers with Band
and a dozen of old veterans followed
I also attended the funeral, never did
I recollect seeing so many people
on the Hill before, he was buried at
Compton Dando, quite a jolly old
man and a good neighbour
Now a few words about the great
European War, which affected every
country under the sun August 4th 1914
will never be forgotten, as on that day
War was declared on Germany, people
said it would be over in six weeks
well the six weeks went on into 5 years
before Germany was beat, and every
family in England Ireland Scotland
& Wales knew what it was to lose TV

Edwin's article entitled 'Keynsham Resident's Reminiscences' with his photograph appeared in the Western Daily Press on 21st April, 1921.



Another view of the Lamb & Lark, looking towards the church. The conical Gothic 'beehive' on the right was a coal weighbridge. Much of old Keynsham was swept away by the floods in 1968, when I watched the torrential rain from a window of Bristol Maternity Hospital, having just given birth to my elder daughter Caroline. What remained of these buildings was demolished in 1970.

A brief resume of Edwin Fray's life:

1832: Charles Fray, widower & Love Harvey, married at Bathwick

1833: Edwin Henry Fray, son of Charles & Love, baptised Keynsham

1836: Edwin orphaned on death of his father, Charles.

1841: living with grandmother Nancy, his aunt Maria Fray and Thomas Evans at Keynsham

1851: still living in Nancy's household with aunt & uncle, Maria & Thomas Evans, and their daughter Sarah. Named as Edward Evans, 18, brass mill labourer, born at Bath.

1853, 17th April. Married at St Mary Redcliffe to Hester Smith. His occupation is stated to be 'shoemaker' which is puzzling, and if true, makes nonsense of his continuous 66 years at the Brass Mills, unless they had a cobbling division.

1853, 20th October: birth of son Charles.

1855, 20th September: birth of daughter, Mary Ann.

1857, 2nd November: birth of daughter, Leah.

1859, 18th January, Leah died aged 14 months, pneumonia. Death registered by Elizabeth Shortman who was present.

1860: birth of daughter Emma.

1861: aged 27, a tube brazier with Hester, and children Charles, 7, Mary Ann, 5 & Emma, 1. Living next door but one to Tom & Maria Evans.

1863, 31st December, Emma died aged 3, of bronchitis. Edwin registered the death

1871: aged 38, tube maker, with Hester, and children George, 8, Emily, 6, Frank, 4, Ellen, 2 (The whereabouts of Charles and Mary Ann, the elder children, unknown).

1878. Emma, daughter, born. She died aged 6 months, 8th June, from a disease of the spine. Edwin registered the death.

1881: living at Bath Road, brass tube maker, 47, with Hester, Frank, 14, 'servant, brass', Ellen, 12, Henry Herbert, 6, scholars.



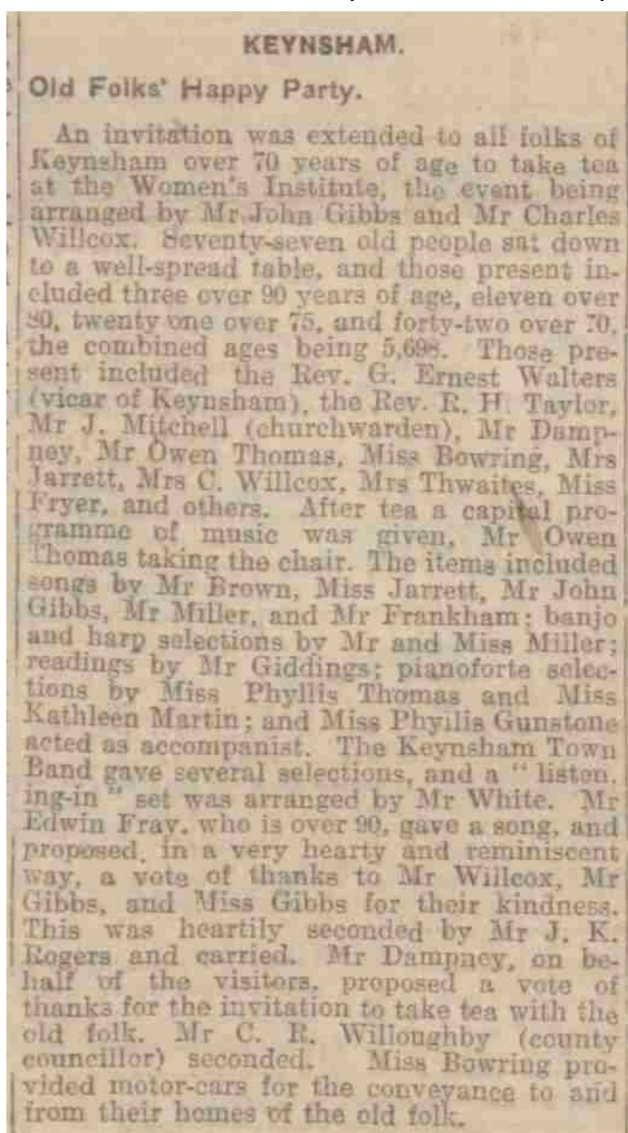
Keynsham School

1891: Bath Road, aged 57, brass worker, (states birthplace as 'Bath' which he has not done since 1851), Hester, and sons Frank, 24, wire drawer & Henry, wire riveter.

1901: Bath Road, aged 67, brass wire worker, wife Hester, 67.

1911: Bath Road, aged 77, Old Age Pensioner, born Keynsham (!) Hester, 78. (1911 is the last census currently available.)

1913: 'Keynsham Couple's Diamond Wedding'both remembered the Coronation of Queen Victoria.... Mr Fray retired after 66 years' service when he was presented with a watch.....still a keen gardener, having won many prizes, and Mrs Fray an expert needlewoman.....Mr Fray won many awards at industrial exhibitions for articles made in brass.....seven children and twenty six grandchildren.....received many visitors and well-wishers at their picturesque cottage....³⁹.



1916: Hester died 20th December. . Edwin placed an 'In Memoriam' notice the following year: 'In Loving Memory of my dear wife Hester Fray, who passed away Dec. 20th, 1916, wife of Edwin Fray of Keynsham, sadly missed by her husband, sons and daughters.'⁴⁰

1921: Edwin's article concerning his life appeared in the Western Daily Press.

January 1924: Edwin included in a large gathering at an Old Folks Party given by the WI. He was then over 90, sang a song and proposed the toast (left)⁴¹

1924. Edwin died on 16th April aged 91. An obituary notice was placed by his children in the Western Daily Press the next day.

1924: The property of Edwin Fray (dec'd) was auctioned: 16 & 18 Bath Rd, Keynsham freehold cottages, one with vacant possession
No. 15 – with 5 rooms let to Mr F. Loader, 5 shilling weekly
No. 18 - 3 rooms, vacant possession.
Both with small gardens plus outbuildings incl. a back kitchen and a joint well. ⁴²

His will was proved, 6th May, with probate granted to John Goodhind, effects £476. 14s. 9d.

In the account of his life Edwin mentions only one family member, his grandson, William Goodhind, who was the son of his daughter Emily and her husband Alfred John Goodhind, a Railway Porter. (Possibly he is the same as John Goodhind who executed Edwin's will.) In

³⁹ WDP 19.4.1913

⁴⁰ Ibid 20.12.1917

⁴¹ Ibid 4.1.1924

⁴² Ibid 28.6.1924

1911, the Goodhind family was living at 2 Beaufort Ave, Barton Hill, Bristol, having produced eight children, all then living. All eight were living at home, aged between 23 and 4 years old, including William C. Goodhind, aged 19, a van guard on the Great Western Railway.

His military records show he was in the Welsh Guards and discharged in respect of "wounds" – but not it would seem until 1919. Despite his terrible war injuries, he lived to be 77, dying in Bristol at the end of 1968.



The Men of the Keynsham Brassworks in 1870.

Back Row, l-r: William OLLIS, Rufus WILLIAMS, John FRANKHAM, Robert WILLIAMS, Edwin FRAY, an engine driver, two Cornishmen, (engaged to build the annealing tower), William VEALE, -?-, James VEALE, James WILLIAMS, George GREGORY, 'Jarman' OLLIS, Simpson PARSONS, Samuel SAUNDERS, Thomas SHORTMAN sen., Thomas VEALE
 Second row: Mr. ROBERTS, Isaac SHEPPARD sen., EVANS, Thomas REED, -?-, Henry STEAGER, Charles CARPENTER, Thomas HARDY, James SHORTMAN, Edward WILLIAMS, George WHITE, Robert HEADINGTON, Francis SMITH, Samuel SHEPPARD, Charles WEBB, William KRINTZ, Samuel WELLINGTON, James TAYLOR, Isaac SHEPPARD, Henry FOX, -?-, -?-, John HODGE
 Third row (sitting): Joseph WITHEY, Richard ROBERTS, Thomas EVANS, Samuel WILLIAMS, William EVANS, Charles Gane, Walter BRAY, Jonas HICKS, -?-, Eli VEALE, Aaron JARRETT
 Front row: James FORD, -?-, Samuel JARRETT, William BEES, Henry EVANS, George FRANKHAM, -?-, Albert EXON, Henry GILES, -?-, -?-, Albert SINCOCK.

Note the names Ollis, Fray, Shortman, Steager, Krintz of the original 'Dutch' families. I wonder if 'Jarman' Ollis said "We be Jarman," i.e. German, hence the nickname? Thomas Evans, 3rd left in 3rd row may be Maria Fray's husband. Edwin Fray is 5th left, back row. (Courtesy of 'Bitton families' website which supplies the names.

A War Hero

George Croxall Fray in his address to the Keynsham LHS made a passing reference to the obituary someone had sent him of an 'Ellen Fray, the wife of Bert Fray of South Brewham. Bert turned out to be Albert, a retired West African Trader, the son of George, born 1863.' It was not G.C.'s way to divert into byways and the thread was left hanging, included with brief allusions to press reports of a Baby Fray who had eaten a £5 note and a taxi-driver Fray who had won an appeal over a parking conviction. "Neither family replied to my enquiry," George said wistfully, presumably raising a laugh among the assembly.

George, Bert's father, was one of Edwin's sons, indeed born in 1863. By 1881, he had left Keynsham, aged 18, for work as a metal roller, living in lodgings at High Street, Northfield in Worcestershire. A fellow lodger was his elder brother Charles, a wire drawer, aged twenty eight. Charles Fray, an economic migrant to the Birmingham area, the centre of the brass making industry remained in Northfield and is listed as 'born Bristol' in 1891 when living at Harborne Lane with his wife Elizabeth and two daughters, Leah and Marion. He was still working there as a wire drawer in 1911. He died in 1923 aged 69.

Meanwhile, brother George had returned to Bristol where he lived at various addresses in Balmain Street, Knowle, with his wife Tira Louisa, nee Aust, born at Corsham in 1869, the daughter of Henry Aust, a stone quarryman and his wife Jane. George & Tira, more usually known as Louisa had sons, Edwin Henry, born in 1891 and Albert George in 1893.

In 1891 George was working as a railway porter but soon rose to become a Railway Policeman for the famous Great Western Railway otherwise the GWR. By 1911, both his sons were grown up, though still living at home, Edwin Henry, 20, a poultry farmer, and Albert George, 18, an engineer's clerk.

George died on 5th February 1940, 'at 1 Westwells, Corsham, George Fray late of Balmain St, Bristol, passed away peacefully after much suffering. Funeral Neston Parish Church, Thursday, 2.30.'⁴³

Edwin Henry Fray, George's elder son went to the USA as we are told in another obituary: 'FRAY, October 1, 1948, suddenly at Duluth USA, Edwin (Ted) beloved son of Mrs Louisa & the late George Fray of West Wells, Nr. Corsham, Wilts.'⁴⁴

As to Albert George, the younger son, he married Ellen Johnson in 1919 at St Giles, in London. Ellen died in 1967, and it was her obituary to which George Croxall referred. I have failed to discover anything about his life as an 'African Trader', and I am reminded by Edwin's account that the Keynsham Company traded with Africa, so this may be another connection with brass. The first born of their three children, Frank Gerald Fray, DFC, is the War Hero of this chapter of the Fray story.

⁴³ Obit. WDP 7.2.1940

⁴⁴ Obit WDP 22.10.1948

In 1943, the Royal Air Force No. 617 Squadron or 'Dambusters' used a specially developed bouncing bomb to attack the dams that supplied hydro-electric generated power to Germany's industrialised Ruhr valley. The aim was to bring the German military to a halt by denying power to the factories that would build the machines and ammunition required for Adolf Hitler's war.



Operation Chastise was carried out on 16th -17th May and its success is the stuff of legends. Barnes Wallis' spectacular feat of engineering allowed a

bomb to bounce across water until it struck its target, before sinking to explode underwater. The Möhne and Edersee dams were breached, causing catastrophic flooding of the Ruhr valley and the Eder valley.

Iconic photographs showing Germany's submerged industrial heartland quickly found their way onto the front pages of British newspapers. The images were taken during a lone flight in an unarmed plane on 17th May by Frank Gerald, known as 'Jerry', Fray. A flying officer in the Photographic Reconnaissance Unit, Jerry had flown in a specially adapted sky-blue



camouflaged Spitfire to capture the devastation wreaked by the Dambusters' raid. Jerry's identity was only revealed in 2001 by the RAF and brought to the public's attention through an interview in The Sunday Telegraph in the same year. "I could see the industrial haze over the Ruhr area and what appeared to be a cloud to the east. On flying closer I saw that what had seemed to be cloud was the sun shining on the floodwater," said Jerry. 'I looked down into the deep valley which had seemed so peaceful three days before, but now it was a wide torrent.'

With his photographs proving to be a massive morale boost to the British public, Jerry had written himself into the history books. Born in Bristol in 1920, the eldest of three children, (Roger and Jean were the other two) he was educated at the City of London Freeman's School in Ashted, Surrey. With war imminent

in 1938, his parents were not enthusiastic about his desire to become a pilot so he volunteered for the army and joined the Royal Engineers. Shortly after the outbreak of war,

he was sent to France and attached to the No. 4 Squadron at Mons en Chaussée. Evacuated from Dunkirk in 1940, Jerry was transferred to the RAF for pilot training shortly afterwards. His early flying training was at the No. 4 Elementary Flying Training School in Brough, followed by advanced training at the No. 9 Service Flying Training School in Hullavington, where he gained his pilot wings and was commissioned into the RAF in January 1942. Electing for special duties, Jerry undertook specialist navigation training before flying unarmed Spitfires at RAF Benson. With his photography of the Möhne dam immortalising the exploits of the Dambusters, Jerry was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and later the Belgian Order of Leopold and Belgian Croix de Guerre (with palm) for photographic work to help the Belgian resistance.

A correspondent, Edward G. Waite-Roberts recalled that "Jerry flew over the dams on several occasions prior to the raid, including the day before and again the day after. Upon returning to his home base, the film from his cameras would be quickly processed and (after his PR Spitfire was refuelled) he then flew copies directly onwards to the then RAF Spitalgate at Grantham. He would then deliver them personally to the Dams Project team with the great advantage that he was able to describe exactly what he had seen only the briefest of time before."

After two successful operating tours, and with the war ending, Jerry was posted to India to command the No. 34 Squadron at Palam, Delhi. After the partition of India he joined No. 80 Squadron in Germany, still flying Spitfires, but in a tactical role. Then followed a period as a regular officer with No. 613 (City of Manchester) Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force, and two and a half years in Greece with the RAF Mission. Twelve months at the Staff College at RAF Bracknell preceded various staff appointments at Fighter Command and RAF HQ in Germany.

After retirement in 1963, Jerry became an enthusiastic Freemason, rising through the hierarchy becoming Worshipful Master of his Lodge in 1979, to his final appointment as Past Provincial Grand Sword Bearer in 1999. He retired to Somerset in 1981.

Squadron Leader Fray died on 26th June 2003, having lived long enough to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the Dambusters and his remarkable flight over the Ruhr valley. Ten years later, his contribution to the war effort still resonates in an evocative series of black and white photographs that were captured at first light on that May morning.

"When I was about 150 miles from the Mohne dam I could see the industrial haze over the Ruhr area and what appeared to be a cloud to the east. On flying closer I saw that what had seemed to be cloud was the sun shining on the floodwaters.

"I looked down into the deep valley which had seemed so peaceful three days before [on an earlier reconnaissance mission] but now it was a wide torrent.

"The whole valley of the river was inundated with only patches of high ground and the tops of trees and church steeples showing above the flood. I was overcome by the immensity of it."⁴⁵

Longevity

Jerry's great grandfather Edwin Fray, who at his own account spent sixty six years working at the Brass Mills from the age of nine, was not alone in this achievement. Many of his workmates clocked up amazing periods of service (if not servitude) which again reinforces my idea that employees were to a great extent owned by 'The Company'. Having no claim on parish funds before 1834 and afterwards with the Workhouse looming, it was in their interests to remain under the firm's umbrella. Only a few managed to get away, and set up independently, like Charles the carpenter, several blacksmiths, and Luke, who joined the Army, though even he went back to wiredrawing when he returned from the wars. A few of the long-time Company servants find themselves in the newspapers, lauded for their fidelity.

William Harper, who died in Keynsham aged 84 on 16th December 1839, had been 'above 70 years in the employ of Bristol Brass & Copper Co.'⁴⁶

Joseph Eshod, a wiredrawer, aged 83, died in Keynsham on 7th January 1842. His obituary in the Bristol Gazette of 20th January 1842 reports: 'He has been in the employ of the Bristol Brass & Copper Co. since childhood. He travelled from Warmley to Keynsham, a distance of 6 miles every day exclusive of Sundays for 52 years and was never absent a week during that time. The distance travelled was nearly equalled to four times the circumference of the earth. He had been superannuated for the last few years of a small weekly allowance by the company.' Joseph appears in the 1841 census 'aged 85, a wire drawer' living alone at Warmley Tower. The census taker interpreted his name as *Isaoed* which makes no sense.

Matthias Johnson was awarded £5 in 1838 for seventy years faithful service. His obituary four years later states he was in his 90th year having been employed by the Old Brass & Copper Co. from the 9th year of his age. He was buried at Keynsham 22nd February 1842,⁴⁷ but cannot be found in the census.

William Martin, senior, who died in 1843, was relatively young at 74. He belonged to Baptist Mills and had been employed 62 years by the Bristol Brass & Copper Co. as noted by the Bristol Gazette, 23rd March 1843.

Three men, Richard Willington, 60, William Ford, 79, and Samuel Steager, aged sixty nine died within a few days of each other in 1843: Richard on 19th September, William, a Baptist,

⁴⁵ Taken from the article in 'Freemasonry Today' by Sqn.Ldr. Bob Chevin & original article Sunday Telegraph, 15.7.2001, Daniel Fogo & Michael Burke.

⁴⁶ Bristol Mercury 21.12.1839

⁴⁷ Day, Joan, *ibid*, Bristol Brass, p173 & Bath Chron. 3.3.1842

on 22nd September and Samuel, on the 30th December. 'The above individuals were in the employ of Harford's & Co., Brassworks and the time of their combined labours amounted to 180 years', congratulated the Bristol Mercury on 7th October 1843.

At the Bristol Agricultural Society's Annual Show just prior to Christmas, 1847, Nicholas Hollis (sic) was rewarded with £4 in recognition of his 60 years with Harford's Brass Company.⁴⁸

On 11th May 1850, George Ollis, of Keynsham, aged 81, died after a painful illness, having worked for Bristol Brass and Copper Company 68 Years.⁴⁹

James Hudson, a wiredrawer, aged about 78, died on 8th May 1852, having worked for the Brassworks at Keynsham for nearly 70 years. He was buried at Keynsham Baptist Chapel.⁵⁰

After these achievements, the old guard had possibly all died out, or the newspapers grew tired of recording them.

Henry Fray's wife, Harriet's parents, resident in Keynsham in 1841 and 1851, were George Reed, a battery man, and Sarah his wife, who was said to have been born at Didmarton, Gloucestershire. George was born in 1796, the third child of John Reed and Martha Ollis who were married in 1791. Martha was the daughter of William Ollis and Martha Craymore, whose father, William Craymore was baptised in Keynsham in 1721, the son of Anthony, one of the first 'Dutch' immigrants, and certainly a close relative of 'our' Jane, the wife John Fray. Sarah Reed's parentage is so far a mystery: the only marriages recorded in the area between a George Reed and a Sarah (either Fluke and Hammans) took place after their children were born. This of course need not rule them out, but there are no corresponding baptisms at Didmarton in either surname, though of course, many Sarahs.

Sarah Reed was taken ill in early December 1851 and died on the 23rd of the month aged 53, 'of fever' of two weeks duration. Her daughter Martha Frankham, was with her and made her mark as informant on the death certificate. There is no record of Martha Reed's marriage to a Frankham and as she managed to evade the next census, 1861, she has disappeared from the story. The widowed George Reed struggled on for three years, taking solace in the bottle until 8th October 1854 when it was the death of him. An Inquest heard that: *'he retired to bed in a state of intoxication at about 10 o'clock at night and was found dead in bed by his daughter about 1 o'clock the next morning.'* The Verdict was *'Apoplexy accelerated by intemperance,'*⁵¹ and confirmed by the coroner who filed the death certificate.

He was fifty eight. This time, perhaps the unnamed daughter on the scene who made the sad discovery was our Harriet Fray.

⁴⁸ Bristol Mercury 23.12.1847

⁴⁹ Ibid. 18.3.1850

⁵⁰ Ibid 15.5.1852

⁵¹ Bristol Mercury, 21.10.1854

By 1861, only David Fray, now aged 22, was living at home with Jonathan and Jane. Their son John, born in 1831, who was married to Ruth Morgan, had left Keynsham and gone to Bedminster where he worked at labouring jobs variously in a tannery and at one of the coal pits there. He and Ruth had two children, George and Mary Ann. At the age of ten, poor little George, who must have suffered terribly died on 19th March 1864 of a disease of the hip joint and exhaustion.

A Murderous Outrage!

In the April and May of 1865, a 'Murderous Outrage' was reported in Bristol, in London and caused a stir as far away as Dundee.⁵² On 18th April, at about six in the morning, two of Keynsham's blacksmiths, James and John Fray, at work in their smithy, had an altercation. Words led to extreme physical violence during which John seized a heavy sledgehammer and bludgeoned his brother over the head with it, leaving him for dead in a pool of blood. John then ran away, dashing towards the river in a wild state and was observed standing waist deep in the shallows, in the act of cutting his throat. When two of his neighbours, William Phillips and Robert Ruddle managed to drag him to the bank, John Fray told them:

"I have had enough to make me do it!"

Ruddle said *"He looked like a man out of his mind."* He was covered in blood. Ruddle managed to take the knife from his hand and he and Phillips restrained him while another man ran for the surgeon, Mr Lodge. John had lost his wife Ann very suddenly a few weeks before and Ruddle knew this had affected him very deeply.

Ruddle said *"He would tell my father and me of it two or three times a week. He was bad in his mind before the death of his wife, but was worse afterwards."*

John lived for ten days following the attack on his brother. Mr Lodge told the inquest *"I considered it a hopeless case from the first. The gullet and trachea were wounded and consequently no food could pass into the stomach, his life being prolonged only by nutrient injections."*

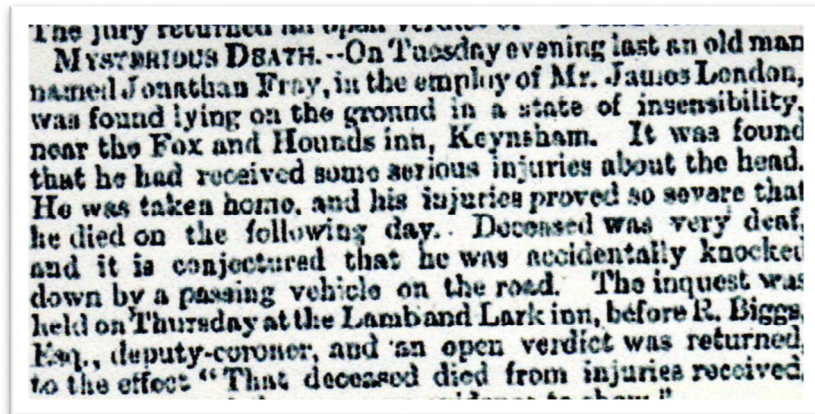
The Coroner who praised Mr Lodge for his devoted attention to the deceased brought in a verdict of 'Suicide. Cut his throat being of unsound mind.' John Fray was sixty five. No motive was ever established for the attack. James, who made a slow recovery, thought his brother might have had a fit, but refused to be more forthcoming. He was still a working blacksmith in 1871 and died in 1876 aged 83.

A Mysterious Death

Just after Christmas 1868, there was another tragedy and another inquest. The newspaper headline reads, 'Mysterious Death'.

⁵² Ibid & other newspapers, 22.4.1854-6.5.1854, *passim*

'On Tuesday evening last an old man named Jonathan Fray, in the employ of Mr James London was found lying on the ground in a state of insensibility near the Fox and Hounds Inn Keynsham. It was found that he had received some serious injuries about the head. He was taken home and his injuries proved so severe that he died the following day. Deceased was very deaf and it is conjectured that he was accidentally knocked down by a passing vehicle on the road. The inquest was held on Thursday at the Lamb and Lark Inn before R. Biggs, Esq., deputy-coroner and an open verdict was returned to the effect that the deceased died due to



MYSTERIOUS DEATH. --On Tuesday evening last an old man named Jonathan Fray, in the employ of Mr. James London, was found lying on the ground in a state of insensibility, near the Fox and Hounds inn, Keynsham. It was found that he had received some serious injuries about the head. He was taken home, and his injuries proved so severe that he died on the following day. Deceased was very deaf, and it is conjectured that he was accidentally knocked down by a passing vehicle on the road. The inquest was held on Thursday at the Lamb and Lark inn, before R. Biggs, Esq., deputy-coroner, and an open verdict was returned to the effect "That deceased died from injuries received

*injuries received but how caused there was no evidence to show.'*⁵³

Bristol Mercury 2nd January 1869. The Coroner forgot to issue a death certificate.

This is unbearably sad. Jonathan, aged sixty nine was an 'old man', older than his years; a

lifetime working with the din from the battery hammers must have caused deafness so profound that he did not hear anything coming behind him, whether on wheels or on foot. Presumably nobody had thought of ear protectors and I wonder how many others who worked in the Mills were deaf. In the cotton mills, with a similar amount of noise, the workers communicated by lip reading, and it must have been the same in the brass mills. The accident, or possibly even an attack, took place in the pitch blackness of a December night. There would have been no street lights. If Jonathan had been in the pub, and had been even slightly the worse for drink, why did no-one see him home? To say the least of it, the enquiry was less than thorough, even shoddy. To add insult to injury, the Coroner forgot to file a death certificate. I wonder whether it was in his pocket, perhaps in a different coat, and he did not discover the mistake until months later, and then he decided it was too late. George Croxall Fray, the Keynsham lecturer, who sent for every Fray death certificate (!) remarked that he could not find one for Jonathan. At the time, George had no access to local newspapers and was thus unaware of the tragic accident. Jonathan was buried at Keynsham church.

From the newspaper report it would seem that Jonathan was no longer capable of working at the Mills, which again points to his severe impairment. He was probably an odd job man. James London, his elderly employer has left little trace in Keynsham or anywhere else. He died a year after Jonathan and his terse obituary occupies one brief line in the local paper, giving only his name and stating he was of Keynsham, aged seventy.

⁵³ Bristol Mercury 2.1.1869

In 1871, the widowed Jane 'aged 75, a pauper' was 'a lodger' in the household of one of her Faux relations, George Faux, a 45 year old day labourer, his wife Charlotte and their two daughters. Later on she moved in with her daughter, Ann Shedden and family.

Ann who was baptised at Keynsham on 31st May 1835 is found in 1841 at the census aged six as part of the family group. As soon as she was able, perhaps about twelve or thirteen, she went into 'service' a fate shared with most young girls of her class. In 1851, at sixteen, she was 'a maid of all work' – a general servant - in a lodging house, 38 St James Square Bath, proprietor Charles Osmond; we may assume the enterprise was not profitable as nobody other than Osmond's wife and daughter were staying overnight. Ten years later Ann was in Bristol, 'aged 24' at Barton Hill Lane, St Philip's, Bristol, at another commercial venture, a linen drapery run by William Horner where her fellow servant was Elizabeth Ollis, 23, of Saltford. Mr & Mrs Horner, as well as having five little Horners, ran the business with four teenage assistants, two boys and two girls, living 'above the shop', where they could be available 'all hours', though I suspect there were a few high jinks too.

By 1871, Ann's life had changed drastically, for by then she was Mrs Shedden, living at George Street, St Philips. Three children had been born to the couple in the last decade: Annie Rosina on 2nd January 1862 at 9 Fox's Terrace, Samuel David, 24th January 1865 and Laura, 27th April 1869, back at Barton Hill Lane. 'Ann Shedden, formerly Fray', registered each of the babies, the father named as Samuel Shedden who worked on the railways in various capacities. Another daughter, Alice, was born on the 20th June 1872 by which time they were living at Folly Lane, and about the same time Jane Fray, Ann's mother moved in with them. She was still with them when she died, aged 79 of Erysipelas Senectus. Erysipelas is a nasty skin disease also known as 'St Anthony's Fire'; Senectus is simply old age.

The Sheddens continued together until Sam died in 1902 by which time they were living at Twerton, near Bath. Despite all appearances, they were never married as Sam had a wife, Helena Williams who he married in Bath in 1855. There is no sign of either Sam or Helena in 1861, but presumably they had separated by the time he met Ann Fray working in Bristol for the draper. Perhaps Sam was a customer at the shop? Helena appears now and then as a widow, and outlived Sam by a year. Samuel junior, who was described as a cripple in 1881 never married and lived with his sister Alice Kelson. By 1911 both Samuel and Alice, now widowed had moved back with their mother in Twerton. Ann Shedden nee Fray died in 1917 aged 82 in Bath.

To Wales....and to Canada

In 1871, Jonathan and Jane's son John and his wife Ruth were alone at 3 Paradise Gardens which I suggest sounds a lot nicer than it actually was. Their only remaining child, Mary Ann, aged 16 was a servant at Dean Lane, Bedminster, for Walter Price, an architect and his family. In 1876, she was married in Pontypridd to Benjamin Kenway, a carpenter, from

Dorset and they had a daughter, Mabel Jane, in 1877. There is no trace of the family in 1881, but it is not really too much of a surprise when Mary Ann's parents, John and Ruth, turn up in Wales, John aged 47 having found work as a railway platelayer. Living with them was an Irish-born hawker, Margaret White and her nine year old son. Margaret is described as 'sister', but is otherwise a mystery.

In 1886, John and Ruth's daughter, Mary Ann Kenway tragically died in childbirth, aged 31, along with her new born baby, also called Mary Ann, leaving her husband Ben with their two little girls, Mabel Jane now aged twelve and Rosina, six. His spinster sister Diana came up from Bridport to help the family, which seems to have been a very small one by Victorian standards, and thereafter they disappear from view apart from Mabel Kenway who married James Morse in Cardiff in 1897. Her grandparents John and Ruth Fray seem to have remained close to Mabel and surely went to her wedding. Ruth Fray died in 1905 aged 75.

John spent his last working years as a labourer for Cardiff City Council. In 1911, he was living at 18 Railway Terrace, Canton with James and Mabel Morse (nee Mabel Jane Kenway) and their three children, Clifford, Willie and baby Rosina. John was described as 'aged 78, wife's grandfather'. And Joy! After the Act of 1908, part of wider social welfare reforms, from 1st January 1909, John had become an old-age pensioner, probably receiving the full rate of five shillings a week. Recipients had to be over 70, of good character, (not a drunk or a convict), had worked all their lives and be worth less than £31.10s a year. To avoid any stigma – oh the taint of pauperism died hard - benefits were paid at the Post Office rather than through the Parish or the Poor Law. If Granddad's contribution to the Morse household was very welcome (James was a labourer), that's as maybe, it is good to think that the old man had someone to care for him in his final years. John Fray died in Cardiff in 1917 aged 84.

In the second half of 19th century many more of the clan found there were alternatives to working at the brass works. George, John's younger brother, went 'on the Railway' as a porter, and following his marriage to Harriet Turner, left for the Midlands, not to Birmingham, but Wednesbury, Staffordshire where he and Harriet and their four children remained settled for the rest of their lives. By 1901, the widowed Harriet opened a corner shop, which like so many was probably little more than a window in the front room of the house she shared with her daughter and son-in-law, Mary and Edward Nightingale, the sort of place which allowed tick until the end of the week and sold tea by the ounce.

David Fray, the youngest brother, confusingly called 'a miller', though surely not of flour, left Keynsham for Newport, Monmouthshire, where he married Elizabeth Ann Hicks in 1865. By 1871 they had moved to Cardiff; they evaded the count in 1881 but by 1891, David, in something of a leap, was an engine driver at Caerleon, living with Elizabeth and their five children, the eldest of whom, Henry aged 14, was apprenticed to his father's trade. Any romantic notion of father and son as driver and fireman criss-crossing the country in a steam train is dispelled by 1901 when David's engine is said to be 'stationary' and at a lime works. David was still at work in Newport in 1911, aged 72, from which it appears that he was ineligible for the old-age pension. Elizabeth Ann, his wife, ten years younger, was the mother of fourteen children, having lost five in infancy. Neither David nor Elizabeth are listed in death indexes but as their daughter Jessie, a nurse, migrated to Canada in 1913, it is

possible that the elderly couple went too. Jessie married Ivor George Johns, an artist, also from Newport, in Vancouver, and they subsequently went to Cleveland, Ohio.⁵⁴



Henry Fray and his wife Harriet Reed

Back in Keynsham, Henry and Harriet's family continued to grow. In addition to their first three children, Lavinia, Martha Jane and Sidney, they had Thomas in 1854, Sarah Elizabeth, 1857, Susannah, 1860, David, 1863, and George Henry in 1865. Martha Jane died aged 15 on 23rd April 1863 of 'fever'. Harriet, 'present at the death' made her mark on the certificate for the Registrar.

Lavinia was married on 30th November 1868 to Thomas Simeon Pillinger at St Mary's, Bitton. Though Tom was just about literate (he signed the register with a shaky signature, misspelling his middle name as 'Simmian') he was otherwise not much of a catch. Though not the youngest of the large family of Stephen and Jane Pillinger, he was something of the runt, thin-faced and slightly built he also had a club foot. Perhaps 'simian' would not have been too far out. Unlike his tough elder brothers who were all coalminers, and definitely not like his younger brother, John who 'made something of himself' as a baker and a property owner, (Pillinger's Road in Kingswood is named after this branch of the family) he was a labourer all his life. If this was not enough he came complete with a young son, Fred Lacey, never registered or baptised, and whose mother is unknown though presumably called Miss Lacey. (*"Uncle Fred was a love-child,"* was all my Dad knew.) Thomas & Lavinia with young

⁵⁴ There is an appeal for information about this family on the website 'Curious Fox'

Fred made their home in the Blackhorse Road district of Kingswood alongside numerous other Pillinger relations at which point Lavinia leaves this part of our story and continues along with the Pillinger family.

Henry Fray stayed a labourer all his life, even on one occasion doing a stint 'down on the farm' as an 'ag lab'. Harriet helped out by taking in washing, but all was evidently not sweetness and light in the household for in 1872, there is a report of an unseemly case in the Western Daily Press concerning one Henry Fray of Keynsham, (and there is no other to fit the bill) who was charged with threatening his wife. He was 'to find sureties to keep the peace for 2 months.'⁵⁵ He looks such a benign old chap in his photograph too.

Henry and Harriet's third-born child, Sidney was married at the age of 19 at St James, Bristol, on 7th March 1869 to Sarah Ann Hake, who was the same age. Sarah Ann was born Combe St Nicholas, Somerset to a tailor, William Hake and his wife, Harriet Matthews Budge. In about 1855 the couple moved to Bristol with Sarah Ann and his younger sister Elizabeth. In due course they added William, Emily, George and Samuel, all born in St Philip & St Jacob, Bristol where they were living in 1861, along with William senior's brother, a skinner, and a lodger, Thomas Quick, aged 32, a labourer, from Devon.

A tragic story was about to unfold.

Two months after her marriage to Sidney Fray, Sarah Ann gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth. The baby died on 28th July 1869 at 37 Edward Street, St Philip's, aged 8 weeks; her cause of death is deeply shocking: 'inherited syphilis'. The death certificate records Sidney's occupation as a 'railway engine cleaner', the informant, Sarah Ann, the child's mother, 'present at the death' marked with a cross and gave her address as 5 George Lane, Bristol.

If the couple had temporarily separated then they must have shortly got back together, for the following year Sarah Ann became pregnant again and gave birth to a son, William, on or around the 28th July. Two weeks later the baby died at 37 Edward Street, cause of death, 'diarrhoea'. This time the informant was Sarah Ann's mother, Harriet Hake, who made her mark stating that she was present at the death.

A census was taken on the 2nd April 1871 with Sarah Ann Fray living apart from Sidney at 10 New Buildings, Barton Hill, stating she was 'married, aged 21, a cotton spinner, born Combe, Somerset' and part of the household of William Barnes, a labourer & family. His wife Mary Ann also worked at the Cotton Factory and I assume they had taken her in. Sidney Fray's whereabouts are unknown, but Sarah Ann was again pregnant and presumably they were back together when she gave birth to a daughter, Martha, shortly afterwards.

In March 1873, another daughter was born, called Honora, at 4 Chancery Street, St Philip & St Jacob. The baby died aged six weeks, the details of her death shown as 'daughter of Sidney Fray, labourer in manure works, cause of death, convulsions, (x) Sarah Ann Fray, present at death.'

⁵⁵ WDP 10.7.1872

On the 18th May 1874, Martha died at 17 Bright Street, St George, 'daughter of Sidney Fray, labourer, of convulsions, aged 2¾ years. (x) Sarah Ann Fray, present at death'.

In August 1874, a boy, George Albert was born. He died on 26th August 1874 at Clifton Union Workhouse, Stapleton, 'aged 14 days, son of Sidney Fray, labourer, of 'Inanition' certified'. Inanition is the most extreme form of malnutrition. This time the informant was not a family member but Elizabeth Alsop, of the Union Workhouse who was present at the death. She marked with a cross. Were the baby boy's parents Sidney & Mary Ann also in the Workhouse at this time, or did Mary Ann go there alone and in desperation? But yet again, they seemed to have got back together and out of the Workhouse. On 28th June 1876, their last child, a girl, Amelia, three months old, died at 1 Cumberland Street, St Philip & St Jacob, 'daughter of Sydney Fray, smith's striker, of tubercular meningitis, informant (x) Sarah Ann Fray, present at death'. On the 3rd April 1881 when the census was taken again, Sarah Ann Fray is missing, but Sidney had returned to his parents' house in Keynsham where he was working as an ag. Lab. Less than a year later, 20th January 1882, he was dead, aged 31. He was back living with his wife, whose name and mark appears on the death certificate, of 3 Bright Street, St George. The cause of death was 'chronic kidney disease, eight months'. I had been expecting the worse, so was it Sarah Ann who passed on syphilis to baby Elizabeth? It is perhaps significant that though she went on to marry twice more, to John Thomas Quick in 1882 and Joseph Hole in 1897, she had no more children. Widowed for the third time, in 1911, she lived alone in Newfoundland Street. Sarah Ann Hole died in 1914. In 1901, her mother, Harriet Hake, by then a widow, was in Stapleton Workhouse, described 'imbecile'. She died in 1903.

Among the piles of certificates obtained and distributed by George Croxall Fray so long ago I had noted the child who had died of syphilis and recall how shocked I was. I had hurriedly stowed the document away with the rest, assuming 'it had nothing to do with us'. Those poor little children; what a terrible story it is: life on the bottom rung of Victorian Society.

Thomas, Henry and Harriet's next son, born 20th January 1854, was a stonemason, who married Mary Jane Freegard from Tytherington, getting to the church just in the nick of time before their daughter Martha Louisa was born in 1879. They had two more daughters, Ellen in 1883 and Blanche in 1893.

There are a few misdemeanours attributed to Thomas. In 1868, aged 14, he was charged with the theft of a piece of zinc valued at two shillings and sixpence. He was fined the same amount or seven days 'with hard labour' in default.⁵⁶ In 1878 he was fined 5 shillings for being drunk and disorderly.⁵⁷

On 27th September 1890 there was an unseemly row in Temple Street, Keynsham, when Pc143 encountered 'Jane' Fray allegedly 'drunk and using filthy language' and daring her neighbour, Mrs Thirza Rayson to come out and fight. She was summoned at the Petty Sessions in October. Thomas Fray denied his wife was drunk and said the neighbours, the Raysons, provoked her. Jane was bound over to keep the peace in her husband's

⁵⁶ Bristol Times & Mirror 1.2.1868

⁵⁷ Western Daily Press 12.1.1878

recognizance of £5. At the next Sessions, Thomas Fray brought a counter-claim against Mrs Rayson and her son claiming they had used bad language but his case was dismissed.⁵⁸



In March 1910 Thomas again appeared at the Keynsham Petty Sessions, summoned by Pc 778 for using bad language in Temple Street. The Constable said this was not the first time he had received a complaint. The defendant admitted the offence and said it was on account of his wife. Every time he went in the house *"she started on something"*. The Chairman fined him five shillings saying it was 'foolish of him to come to court 'so often' for using bad language. 'It was an expensive amusement.'⁵⁹

Thomas Fray, 1854-1913

On 28th May 1910 he was summoned once again, under the heading 'Nuisance to Neighbours'. He did not appear as he had seen Ps Salmon the previous night giving apologies for his absence, saying that he had a job to go to. However, he said, as previously that *"it was all his wife's fault"*. The Chairman noted that he had already been summoned three times this year: on February 3rd, fined 7s 6d including costs, 12 shillings on February 25th, 11 shillings on March 18th. Said the Chairman: *"He must now pay 10 shillings plus 7 shillings costs as*

*small fines seemed to have no effect on him."*⁶⁰

I can only hope that his disagreements with his wife were verbal ones, unlike the next case when Caroline Rayson 'appeared with eyes discoloured having been very badly beaten by her husband George Rayson'. The Chairman considered sending Rayson to prison but

⁵⁸ Bristol Mercury, 18.10.1890, Western Daily Press 8.11.1890. In the 1st report Mrs Rayson is called 'Sarah Raison' and I suspect the reporter misheard her first name. In the 2nd report she is called Mary & her son Thomas. 'Thirza' & Levi Rayson lived next door to the Frays and I can find no-one called Sarah, Mary or Thomas Rayson.

⁵⁹ WDP 19.3.1910

⁶⁰ WDP 28.5.1910

decided to give him a chance. He was fined £1 for the assault and another 10 shillings for being drunk. George was none other than one of the many offspring of Levi & Thirza Rayson who still lived next door to the Frays in Temple Street.



Mary Jane Fray, nee Freegard,

In 1911, Thomas filled out the census form in a small neat hand. He was now a bricklayer aged 57, having been married 32 years to Mary Jane, aged 53. Their three daughters were all elsewhere 'in service' but living with them was their granddaughter, Frances, aged five, Ellen's daughter, *"she was a maidservant who was raped by the Master of the House. She gave birth to a daughter. The Mistress of the House denied it could have happened and threw her out."*

It is awful to contemplate the vulnerability of so many young women working and living in households where the master was God. In view of the current sexual scandals involving Jimmy Savile and others, we can only deduce that such assaults were commonplace though disbelieved.

In 1911, Ellen was 28, a servant at Keynsham in the household of Charles Stevens, grandly described as 'Solicitor to the Supreme Court'. How people loved to flaunt their status! Her child was in the care of her parents. She married Arthur Stanley

and had another daughter, Doris, in 1915. Frances married Frank Ogborn in 1926 and Doris, Clifford Lewis in 1940, both leaving descendants in Keynsham and Cadbury Heath.

In 1911, Martha aged 30 was a cook domestic at Bishopston in the household of Herbert Grundy, who, slightly less august, was 'clerk to the Magistrates Court'. Blanche was sixteen and working for a university lecturer, Maximilien Nierenstein, born in Russia, but a naturalised British subject. On census night, he and his wife Alice May, a Welsh girl from Ebbw Vale, had an equally exotic visitor, Casimir Frink aged 27, from Warsaw, then part of

Russia. I do hope young Blanche was safe. She married Edward (Ted) Thompson in 1917 and had seven children, of whom her son Eric Freegard was killed on 29 January 1942 in a training exercise whilst on active service with the RAF in Canada. He is buried at Winnipeg. A daughter, Peggy went to the USA and was last known living at Long Island, New York.

Tom Fray died on the 3rd June 1913 aged 58 of tuberculosis and exhaustion at Temple



Street, Keynsham, (pictured left.) His widow, Mary Jane aged 55 took up with a toy boy, William Williams aged 38, and married him at Keynsham Church two days after Christmas in 1914. The wedding was witnessed by her daughter and son-in-law, William and Martha Louisa Hayman. The conjunction of the name 'Mary Jane' and 'Williams' means that she has disappeared for ever.

More than twenty years ago, I resolved to make a Rogues Gallery of my direct ancestors and wrote to the Bristol Evening Post requesting that anyone who had photographs of the Fray



family to get in touch. In my experience, it is the women in the family who keep the mementoes and with several name changes such information is difficult to trace. There was one reply, from Dorothy Acford, who turned out to be my third cousin. We shared great-great grandparents, Henry and Harriet Fray. Dorothy had photos not only of Henry and Harriet, but also one of their sons, Thomas, her great-grandfather, the nearest likeness I will ever get to his sister, my great-grandmother, Lavinia Pillinger, nee Fray

Dorothy in about 1970

Dorothy and I met appropriately at an open evening at the old Keynsham Brassworks and joined a tour led by the same Joan Day to whom I had written many years ago after she was interviewed one afternoon on daytime

TV (TWW) as I fed my baby Kevin. I had never heard of 'the Dutchmen' then, but some genetic link jolted a folk memory, so vivid that I broke out in a cold sweat, and immediately jumped to my feet, still cradling my baby, to check in the mirror to see whether my hair was standing on end. I wrote to Joan telling her of my uncanny experience and asked whether any Pillingers had been brassmen. She must have thought I was mentally deranged. I was disappointed when she replied in the negative, but still convinced, I purchased her book

which mentioned, not Pillinger, of course it didn't, but the name FRAY stood out like an organ stop. I knew that 'my' Lavinia Fray had married Thomas Pillinger. Cousin Dorothy and I have been friends since that first meeting and she has added a great deal to my knowledge of the family from her wide research. After my aunt Pem's death and much later, my brother Colin's she is now the only person that I can talk 'Family History' to, as she is as addicted as I am to the nitty-gritty of our ancestry. (Most people's eyes glaze over.)

Dorothy is the daughter of Margaret Hayman, who was born in 1912 in a cottage in Oldland Common, the only surviving child of Martha Fray, the daughter of Lavinia's brother Thomas, who married William Hayman, a boot maker in 1912.



This striking looking woman with the important hat is Martha Louisa Fray pictured on a country walk in 1912 with her soon to be husband, William Hayman, who looks terrified.

Martha may have been afflicted with a family trait which Dorothy and I share: unless we have an idiotic grin on our faces people are wont to say to us "Cheer up, love, it may never happen...."

Martha Hayman died in 1962 aged 82, 'of old age' in hospital at Wells.



***This was a family gathering, 1938/9 in the grounds of the Ivy Lodge Hotel, Keynsham.
Sitting: Martha Hayman, nee Fray and Frances Ogborn, nee Fray, the daughter of Ellen
Standing: June & Diana Ogborn, the daughters of Frances, unknown, Peggy Thompson,
daughter of Blanche
Front kneeling: Pauline & Tony Thompson, with un-named dog, more of Blanche's
children. Blanche who died aged 57 of breast and lung cancer was the proprietress of Ivy
Lodge.***

Margaret Hayman's story.

As well as his day job, William Hayman tended his vegetable garden, was involved with the local flower shows, the pigeon fanciers club and the British Legion. In his spare time he was a representative of the Rational Friendly Society⁶¹. Martha was well known for her hospitality and home-made wines.

Margaret was academically bright and passed 'The Scholarship' to Kingswood Grammar School where she excelled at games. She cycled to school, often accompanied by another student called Bernie who eventually achieved world-wide renown as Sir Bernard Lovell of Jodrell Bank. She was a promising artist and won another scholarship, this time to the Slade School of Art, but her parents could not afford to send her there so she took a course in shorthand, typing and bookkeeping and landed an office job. Travelling regularly by train from Bitton Station she met a young fireman called Henry George Hill, Harry, who plucked up courage to ask her for a date. They were married in Bristol in the spring of 1932 and their

⁶¹ Before large-scale government and employers' health insurance, such Friendly Societies played an important part in the lives of the working class to provide financial protection in times of sickness. My Dad's Friendly Society was the 'Hearts of Oak'.

daughter Dorothy was born the same year. Henry worked his way up the ladder (!) of the Fire Brigade to become a senior engine driver, thus when war came in 1939 he was in a 'reserved occupation' but his job was a dangerous one, driving trains carrying ammunition from place to place and on occasions was 'dive-bombed' by the enemy, a particularly hair raising experience. Margaret struggled with rationing, bombing and the loss of relatives. On Sunday 24 November 1940 she and Dorothy followed their usual routine of visiting her parents when they were caught up in the Bristol Blitz and unable to complete their journey home, along with other travellers were taken in by kind folks of Holy Trinity, Kingswood and bedded down in the church hall.



Margaret, back row, second from right, in the hockey team at KGS. The girl, second from left back row is a Pillinger, possibly Stella, daughter of John the baker.

In 1941, Margaret gave birth to her second daughter, Sheila, who sadly died at two weeks old. In the meantime Dorothy had spent nine months as an evacuee in Cornwall, beginning a life-long love affair with the county. She returned home after her baby sister's death. There was great joy when Harry and Margaret had a baby boy, Eric, in 1943 who she named after her cousin Eric Thompson who had been accidentally killed in Canada the year before. After the war, life continued hard, with rationing ever more stringent. In 1947, Margaret became pregnant again and at the same time Harry was diagnosed with cancer of the bladder, considered to be a death sentence. Margaret gave birth to another daughter who died aged two days. Miraculously, Harry recovered sufficiently to be able to return to work and then died suddenly from pneumonia in 1949 aged forty seven.

Margaret embarked on a new life. She was confirmed into the Church of England at St Ambrose, Whitehall having been brought up in a chapel-going family in Oldland Common.

As the family breadwinner, she bravely cycled all over Bristol as a 'rep' for the Rational Friendly Society, just like her father before her. She eventually learned to drive a car and continued to drive until she was eighty three. On her rounds, she met a widower, a builder and decorator called Jack Lloyd, and they were married in 1953. They took holidays in Cornwall where Margaret had visited Dorothy as an evacuee, and both families joined them in turn. Their marriage lasted twenty years until Jack's death in 1973. Margaret then took on a domestic job at Bristol University but temporary ill-health forced her to give up. Near to her home was a fish and chip shop owned by Jeff Hamblin, widowed like Margaret, and they became friendly. They were married in 1977. On retirement they moved to North Common, Warmley, near to Eric and his family and not too far from Oldland Common where Margaret started life. When the large garden became too much for them, they moved to a bungalow at Ram Hill, Coalpit Heath. Even though the move had been somewhat reluctant, they were happy there until Jeff's death in 1991.



***Margaret, in later life,
photographed by her son, Eric.***

By Dorothy and Eric's marriages Margaret acquired grandchildren, step-grandchildren and great-grandchildren. They are Desmond, David & family, Andrew & family, Roger & family, Jane & family, Christopher, and James & family. She was delighted with them.

She kept up with affairs local, national and international, read avidly and was a competent knitter and sewer until her fingers could no longer cope. Through various day centres she made many friends and a special coach enabled to travel with these groups. She continued her love affair with the C of E and took communion with the Vicar of St Saviours. She was determined to

remain living at home but eventually, aged 96, had to accept that life had changed for good and moved into the Oak Tree Home at Yate. She died at Frenchay Hospital on 11 February 2009. It was not possible to be buried with each of three husbands so her wish had been to be interred with her parents at St Anne's Church, Oldland. Happily, this final wish was granted.

As with her mother, Dorothy's life has been touched by tragedy. She lost her first husband, Fred Smith, known as Des in a terrible accident when a petrol tanker discharging petrol into an underground tank at M & M Garage, Ashley Road, Bristol, exploded, killing ten people

and injuring fifteen more. The Proprietor of the garage who had no licence to store petrol was among the dead, along with his wife and son who was on leave from the RAF.

Dorothy later married Frank Acford and was widowed again after many happy years. She has two sons and several stepsons, though sadly has not been blessed by grandchildren on her own line.



***The conflagration
at Ashley Road in
1951.***

More of Henry & Harriet's family.....

Henry and Harriet's daughter Sarah Elizabeth was born in Keynsham in 1857. She married George Rawlings in Bristol in 1891, though in the census of that year she was living with her parents at Bath Hill, 'married, a laundress, aged 32', whilst her bridegroom was a boarder at Rock Road. They had three children, Herbert in 1893, Beatrice, 1898 and Percy, 1898. George clearly did not hold with 'airs and graces' and in 1891 described himself as 'an ordinary ag lab.' They were then living at 1, Tanyard. By 1911, they were at Stockwood Vale, George, 49, a farm carter, Sarah, aged 53, with the children all at work, Herbert, 18, a gardener, Beatrice, 16, a servant, both for 'a gentleman' presumably the same one, whilst Percy, aged 13, was 'minding birds on farm'. Sarah Rawlings died in 1937 aged 79.

Susannah Fray, Henry and Harriet's youngest daughter, born in 1860, married George Cole, a railway porter at St Philip & St Jacob's church on 12th April 1887. In 1891 they were living at 11 Queen Street, Stapleton, Bristol with their baby, Frank, aged 3 months. By 1901, they were at 42 High Street, Easton, in the parish of St Mark's, now with four children, Frank, 10, Cecil, 9, Wallace, 6 and Violet, 1. In 1911, Susannah stated that she had given birth to five children of whom four were still living. Only three were at home on census night, Frank, a waiter, Wallace, a clerk and Violet, still at school. The family was then at 140 Wick Road,

Brislington, now a very swish hairdressers: sassiestudios.com [unisex], (all lower case); it was empty of clientele when I looked in one Friday morning recently. I admired the owner's pluck for going into business in these precarious times, but I wondered if the place might be a bit too posh for Wick Road. By coincidence we spent the first few years of our married life there, just a few houses away in no. 152. In our time 140 was a chemist shop. In 1911, Cecil was absent from the family group and I suspect he had enlisted in the army.

David Fray, who was born in 1862, married Cecilia Adlam at St Silas Church in Bristol on 18th January, 1891. He was then aged 26, of 4 Feeder Road, occupation 'brass moulder'. Cecilia was 24, a spinster of Small Street, St Philip's Marsh. They set up home in 4 Temple Street, Keynsham, near Cecilia's parents, James and Celia, who lived at no. 8. In 1901, David was working as a mason and they were at no. 15 Temple Street, now with four children, Henry, 8, David, 7, Rosina, 5 and Gertrude, aged three. David Fray died in July 1901 at the early age of thirty seven and was buried in Keynsham Municipal Cemetery on the 27th of the month. In the census of 1911, Henry Fray, his son, now aged eighteen, a wire drawer, grandly promoted himself the head of the household at Temple Street, with his widowed mother in the secondary position followed by David, 17, a butcher's assistant, Rosina, 15, a domestic servant and Gertrude, 13, a domestic help.



Henry Fray with his grandson Herbert Rawlings, who according to 'Great Aunt Flo', nee Pillinger was "the boy with no nose". The picture must have been taken about 1897 as I suppose Herbert was about four and still wearing a dress, (including a flouncy pinafore) as was the custom of the time which existed up to the 1920s. Boys were not dressed as girls but dresses were considered practical for both sexes. Herbert would have been 'breeched' (put in trousers, pronounced 'britches') when he was 5 or 6 years old.

Young Henry got into the papers in August 1916 when William Head was fined ten shillings for assaulting him:

Henry Fray entered a train at Bristol at 9.45 am. Some girls called to him to enter the carriage as they did not want the defendant and two other young men to enter the compartment. After some bother, the defendant went into another carriage but when Henry Fray alighted from the train at Keynsham, the defendant struck him. Head alleged that Fray had struck him when the girls said "You are not coming in here!" when there was room in the carriage. When he got to Keynsham he challenged Fray for knocking him at Bristol and struck him in the shoulder. Fray replied with a blow intending to hit him, but failed.⁶²

Henry Fray was then twenty three, and I am quite surprised that he was not in the army. He married Rita Mullins in 1920 and they went to Bath, where both lived into their nineties. His brother David Fray became a successful butcher in Keynsham and made a number of appearances in the local press attending fat stock shows. He married Helen Sheppard in 1922 and they had one daughter, Betty, in 1925. Her marriage to Ronald J. Herniman took place at Keynsham in January 1947.⁶³

Cecilia Fray lived to a great age. I remember my grandfather Albert 'Pap', Pillinger, Lavinia Fray's son, himself then in his mid-nineties saying: "Old? Me? Why, I got an aunt alive, over a 'undred!" Cecilia died in 1969 in her 103rd year.

The last of Henry and Harriet's children was George Henry, born in 1866 who married Emma Jane Burgess at Holy Trinity Church, Bath in 1889. According to censuses she was known as Jane. The couple had three children, Sidney, George and Doris and lived variously at Bath Hill and Charlton Road. George Henry worked as a groom/gardener, which by 1911, was 'on his own account', with Sidney, aged 20, a gardener at an asylum (probably Doctor Fox's at Brislington), George, 18, a packer at a bird food factory and Doris, then fourteen, a nursemaid.

Sidney Fray, aged 44, was accidentally killed in a road accident near Bromsgrove, Birmingham in 1934 when the van in which he was travelling with two other men, William Short and Frederick Davies, both of Bristol, struck a kerb, overturned and came to a standstill on its roof. The other two men were taken to hospital with broken limbs and burns but Fray died instantly. He was buried at Keynsham Cemetery in the same grave as his parents.⁶⁴

As to the second son, George, his near namesake George Croxall Fray told the following anecdote in his talk to Keynsham LHS:

"In the summer of 1960, I took my family to the Birmingham Flower Show and browsing through the catalogue I came across the Rabbit Section. Noticing that one of the judges was a George Fray of Bristol, it occurred to me that this might be a link with my ancestors. So I made enquiries of another judge who it transpired had travelled up with George Fray the

⁶² WDP 18.8.1916

⁶³ Bath Chron 18.1.1947

⁶⁴ Ibid 26.9.1934

day before. As we were talking, a man in a white coat, short of stature and for all the world like my father came towards me. I was introduced: 'George Fray – meet George Fray!'

"Unfortunately George died before we made much progress with our common interest but thus I made the acquaintance of his sister the late Doris Fray who offered to search the registers of your parish church....."

Doris Gertrude Fray, born in 1897, George's sister and the other George's valued informant was not christened until 1915 when she was received into St John the Baptist church at Keynsham. She never married and was apparently one of the last surviving Keynsham Frays. She died in Glamorgan in 1966. Her brother George died in 1962 and George Croxall in 1972, just before I had my blinding light on the road to Damascus.

Why we knew Elizabeth Pillinger as Great Aunt Flo I shall never know. She lived in a rank of very plain terraced cottages just below St Michael's Church in the Kingsway, 174 Two Mile Hill where she had tended Lavinia, her mother, until her death. Flo's brother Albert, my "Pap", had died just before I really got to grips with the family history, so Flo, the last of Lavinia Fray's children still alive, then about ninety years old became the fount of all knowledge.

She remembered her grandfather, Henry Fray well, she told me, but her old eyes filled with tears when she spoke of him. The memory was a shocking one. She said "They were gunna put 'im in the Workhouse; 'e went and cut 'is throat."

She was clearly upset and I did not pursue the topic further; to tell the truth, I had my doubts about the matter. Dad, who could generally be relied on when it came to family stories, had never heard about it. If true, it had never been generally mentioned, probably covered up, owing to the shame.

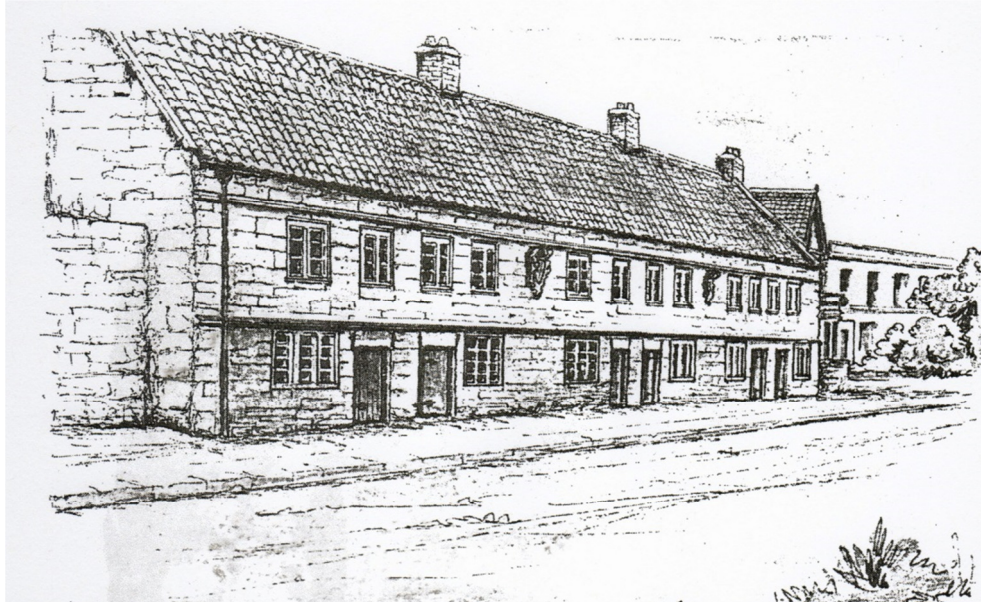
In a few moments Flo recovered herself and produced a photograph of Henry, saying, "*You can 'ave that. The boy with 'im is 'erbert; 'e 'ad no nose.*" I snatched the photo up greedily.

Hanging on the wall was another photograph, this one being her mother, Lavinia, in her old age. According to Dad, Lavinia was terrifying, "*the only 'oman I knew as could kill a pig*", but the aged lady in the photograph with a halo of white frizzy hair looked exceptionally unthreatening. I pleaded but Flo would not let me borrow the photo for copying, as "*it's the only one I've got,*" and so, sad to say, it is consequently lost forever.⁶⁵ Lavinia had been bedridden but never became incontinent. "*That was all that pleased her in the end; she never wet the bed,*" Flo said. Lavinia died in 1936 aged 89.

Sad to say, her story of Henry's end was all too true. He died on 28th July 1900 of 'bronchitis following division of the trachea caused by cutting his throat during a state of temporary insanity.' An inquest was held at the Coffee Room of Walker's Restaurant in Keynsham before Mr. Craddock the Coroner for North Somerset two days later. The report in the Bath Chronicle of 2nd August differed from the death certificate in only one particular: it elevated

⁶⁵ These were the days before instant copying. I'm still hoping that Lavinia will turn up.

Henry from 'a labourer' to 'a mason'. Perhaps the informant was a member of the family seeking to add a little class to the sad affair.



In 1901, Harriet, aged 75, was one of six elderly widows resident in the little row of Almshouses in Keynsham. She lived at no. 2, and like the others was described as 'a charity recipient'. Somebody must have felt sorry for her. It was a good deal better than the Workhouse.

The Almshouses were built in 1686 by Sir Thomas Bridges. This drawing by Aureole 'Freddie' Lewis is from 'Keynsham Past & Present' is as they may have appeared in Harriet's time. According to legend the original inhabitants were the widows of eleven men hanged after the Monmouth Rebellion. The Bridges were relatives of the Duke of Chandos who was a patron of Handel, hence another tradition that the great composer was an occasional visitor to Keynsham. An offertory plate in the parish church inscribed 'G.F. Handel, 1751' makes this slightly more credible and of added interest in that it is made of brass! The Almshouses are now one dwelling.

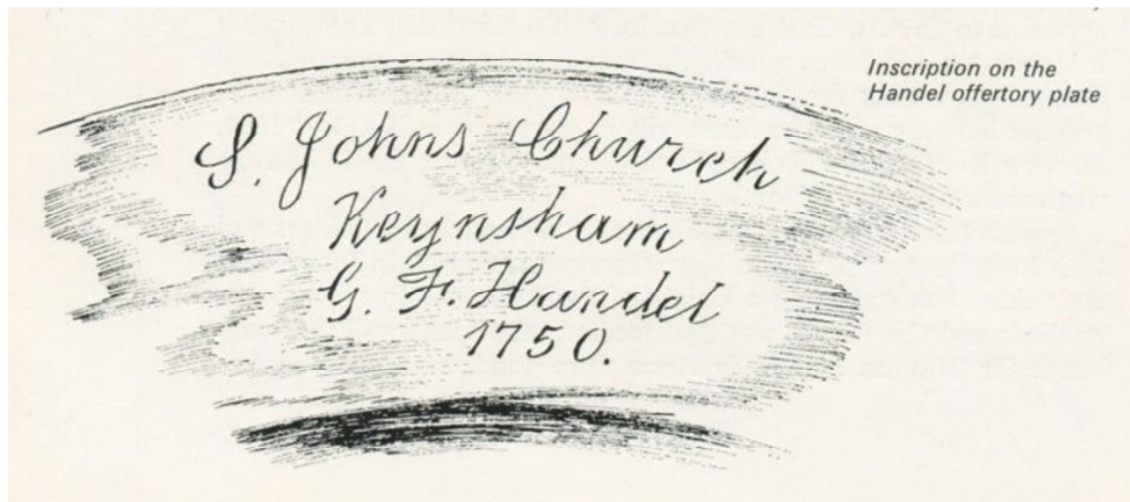
Harriet, widow of Henry Fray, general labourer, died aged 79, of bronchitis on 6th February 1907. Her son Thomas who was 'in attendance' registered her death.



George Frederick Handel 1685-1749

Handel visited Keynsham three times, 1730, 1749/50 and 1751. He is supposed to have been so enamoured by the mellow tone of the organ of St John the Baptist, Keynsham, that he donated a peal of bells in exchange. The bells were made by the Bilbie family of Chew Stoke.

Handel donated the brass offertory plate to the church in 1750.



For expert information see www.fosjkeynsham.org.uk/history/the-entrance-porch/

Allen, F.A. (1969): *The History of the Parish Church of St John the Baptist Keynsham*. Keynsham Parish Church Council.