



The following article presents the historical notes produced by Mrs Connie Smith, a long time resident of Devonshire Buildings, who died in 2013. She writes about Devonshire Buildings and Devonshire Place, plus a number of other places that bear the name Devonshire. The notes have been edited only to the extent of format and the occasional spelling error.

DEVONSHIRE BUILDINGS and DEVONSHIRE PLACE,

in Widcombe & Lyncombe Parish, plus seven other
constructions with the name of Devonshire.

Since the appearance of Devonshire Place and Devonshire Buildings at the top of Bear Flat, Lyncombe, several other properties have also acquired the Devonshire appendage. These are:-

Devonshire Cottage,
Devonshire House,
Devonshire Terrace, and Place,
Devonshire Lodge, Devonshire Arms public house, and
Devonshire Tunnel of the extinct Somerset & Dorset Rlwy.

Devonshire Buildings and Devonshire Place were the first to be built and to understand how they came on to the suburban scene a little background is helpful, as follows:-

During the last quarter of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th a new road was pushed through Widcombe & Lyncombe Parish by the Bath Turnpike Trust. Built in two sections, which accounts for the dual names of Wells Road and Wellsway, today it is the A367 which stretches from Bath to the south and west, via. Radstock. The first section near to the city came circa 1772 and was called Wells Road. It successfully overcame the very steep incline up Beechen Cliff via the old Holloway by cutting an easier route for vehicles up the slope of Beechen Cliff from the elderly bridge of St. Lawrence to Bear Flat (then known as the Flat) and then continued as far as the Entry Hill road junction. Thus it may be seen that the new thoroughfare stimulated development of Bear Flat and particularly the complex of dwellinghouses called Devonshire Buildings and Devonshire Place.

(1) For its day the enterprise was large, and, since it was built immediately prior to the end of the 18th century it represents one of the more remarkable achievements in Widcombe & Lyncombe parish. In architectural terms it probably is not of great merit as it was built not for the market which looked to elegant classicism but towards the middle class patron who sought comfortable modesty. The land had previously been pasture owned by Edward Bushell Collibee who sold it shortly before he died.

To describe the complex in words is difficult, as, although the basic design of the three storey houses may still be seen, many have been very much altered. Some have been raised to four storeys. The backside in particular shows numerous additions which have been made to suit occupants over the two hundred years since the building was first done and the additions echo the changing conditions and lifestyle. Some retain their Venetian windows which had become increasingly popular around the 1750s and 1760s. Devonshire Buildings stand in a long row and not in the romantic crescent shape employed elsewhere in Bath. Each house has a narrow garden in the front on the northern side. The block is positioned at a right angle to the A367 highway at the junction of Entry Hill. Devonshire Place is separate on the far end from the main road and towards Beechen Cliff, forming, as it were, a cap so that the whole may be likened to a capital "T" lying on its back. There is an access road all round called Devonshire Buildings when the development was completed but today it does cause confusion, especially as the area is one of high density housing. On the northern side Devonshire Buildings consists of a roadway lined with turn of the 19th century stone built terrace houses. On the southern side the road (also Devonshire Buildings) is extremely narrow and obviously was constructed to serve as a back lane.

(The water supply was from wells).

- (2) Devonshire Place consists today of a row of four dwellinghouses in a terrace form. The end one on the north side is 100 years younger and was built circa 1903. They have very short narrow gardens in the front. The style of architecture is similar to Devonshire Buildings.
- (3) In 1787 C. Harcourt Masters produced a very fine volume of maps in watercolour for the Bath Turnpike Trust which shows Wells Road and the then projected continuation from Entry Hill up the hill to the Burnt House Inn on Odd Down at the edge of the parish (today the public house is called the Lamplighter and stands in a new position). The map shows Devonshire Buildings as a name only which may be taken to indicate that the row was evidently contemplated but its form not then finalized. Devonshire Place is not represented.
- (4) The Bruton Hospital estate map of 1799 includes both Devonshire Buildings and Devonshire Place. The two maps show that the development was built between 1787 and 1799.

It is possible to make a closer estimation by reference (a) to the local press, (b) to the poor rate books which should suffice until such time as old deeds or other documents can be located for examination.

- (a) In 1790 Bath Chronicle of 18th April announced that Miss Eames was temporarily continuing her school at Devonshire Buildings and this shows that at least part of the complex was finished and people in residence.
- (b) The earliest surviving poor rate book for February 1796 reveals nine occupiers of Devonshire Buildings. Later maps show the block as divided into twenty apartments and houses. Miss Eames had evidently found a permanent address for her school as her name does not appear in the 1796 rates book. Another school listed is that of Miss Aldritt's Ladies Boarding Establishment. A few years later Miss Aldritt moved to Bloomfield Place, at which time William Aldritt transferred his academy to No. 13 Devonshire Buildings from Stoney Littleton near Wellow. It is a curious fact that during its early life Devonshire Buildings attracted several boarding schools. The details may be studied in the Bath Street Directories and also R. G. Whitaker's undated typescript housed in the reference library.

- (5) As for Devonshire Place the first occupier installed stabling and a coachhouse. He prudently had his weather eye pointed towards business when he leased a long narrow close on the southern side of Devonshire Buildings for the purpose of renting out strips for the individual occupiers of Devonshire Buildings to provide stabling coachhouses and market gardens. By the 1830's 27 can be counted. ???????
(The long narrow close was called "Curls" after a previous occupier.

- (6) The earliest mention so far located in print relating to Devonshire Place appears in 1817 when the occasional residence of Sir John Lethbridge was advertised to be sold, or let. (It would seem that even then the "Bath Pad" was in vogue!) Nothing is yet known of this person, but contemporary with press notice, a reference has been spotted of Sir Thomas Lethbridge, M.P.

The poor rate book of February 1796 shows that the occupier of Devonshire Place was then William Phillips, coach maker. It was divided into three apartments, or houses, one being multi-occupancy. Several unrelated occupants in one house was a common occurrence.

Devonshire Cottage lies in its own ground between Wellsway and Bloomfield Road near to the Hatfield Road junction. It has its access from Wellsway, but as will be related, this was not always so.

- (6) In 1908 a "Historical, Descriptive and Biographical book on Somerset" was published in which Thomas Robert Ashman was featured and an interesting biographical excerpt from his life was included. The book also contained an attractive view of Devonshire Cottage set in spacious grounds, and saying that it was dated from the early 17th century with wings added in the 18th and 19th. Part of the estate was declared to be on the site of an ancient British camp called "Berewyke". A theory which was supported by fragments of old weapons and a few coins which from time to time had been unearthed. The estate was then estimated to have been 50 acres from which it may be assumed that it stretched southwards up past Castle estate to the rough uncultivated and scrubby beyond. Several sources mention a British Camp up there and it is also credited with having been a camp of the Romans. Unfortunately it is very unlikely that any archaeological evidence may reveal anything as the high ground has been thoroughly worked and mined for limestone. The name of Pits remains to this day.
- (7) As to "Berewyke", Pitcairn & Richardson considered that the site of the former house of the Berewykes may have been at Devonshire Cottage. In the light of present knowledge it is held that the Berewykes, a family in dominance in the district during feudal times, probably lived near the top of Lyncombe Vale and whose farm (called Barracks in the 18th century) was swept away with the new turnpike road (now the A367). The scant records of the Priory of Bath show that the independent Berewykes were often at odds over rights of common. Eventually it seems the family found it expedient to "run with the hounds" and one of the Berewykes, a merchant of Bristol, became Prior. Eventually the name died out locally from which it may be assumed that the family either moved away or died out. As to Devonshire Cottage as it stands today, it may be described as being in the Cottage Orne style of architecture which came into fashion between 1800 and 1830. (Note: The Regency and early Victorian family was drawn to the romantic charm of exaggerated country style in exteriors. There were ornamental verandas and pretty-pretty "Gothic" detail, often set off by white smooth-surfaced walls and pointed French windows).

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- (10) In 1815 Christopher Barrow and his wife lived at Devonshire Cottage when a son was born to Elizabeth Ann. For the present until anything additional appears, it must be assumed that the house was built for them. However they did not stay long for in 1820 Thomas Jones was in occupation. He was a prominent follower of the non-conformists persuasion and active in the building of Ebenezer Chapel on Dolmeads. The poor rate books reveal that he was owner. In or around 1828 Miss Anna Bayley was tenant and continued in occupation until her death nearly thirty years later. The 1840 Tithe Award shows that the estate was then something over 10 acres in extent. After Miss Bayley's death the house and grounds came up for auction in 1857. It was described as Freehold. The interior was spacious with entrance halls in the front and rear. There was a good dining room with communicating conservatory, drawing room, lady's morning room and small study. There were 6 bedrooms with two patent water closets, housekeeper's room, an excellent kitchen, dairy and requisite domestic offices, etc.

The outbuilding comprised two coachhouses and stabling with sleeping apartments over, along with various greenhouses and other conveniences. The walled garden was said to be highly productive. The surrounding pleasure garden and pasture land containing about 6½ acres was rather less than as detailed in the Tithe Award.

- (12) The purchaser was James Ashman Green. For some unknown reason he added "Green" to his surname, but his son later reverted to Ashman. It was during the lifetime of James Ashman Green that the name of "Green's Waterworks" came into being. Water was supplied from Upper Collins Well. An agreement dated 1840 recites how the springs were intended to be channeled into a reservoir and from there conveyed by stone water courses to "such messuages, lands, and premises as should be required." In the course of time the reservoir came to be known as "Green's" from which it may be assumed that James Ashman Green purchased the waterworks. It was one of many which were eventually taken over by the local authority in the late 19th century.

- (13) Thomas Robert Ashman was born at Holcombe, Somerset in 1852 and privately educated in Bath. His early life was adventurous as he served in sailing vessels before joining the 1st Battalion of Prince Albert's Light Infantry as an Ensign. He later passed through the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester. On the death of his parents and elder brother he succeeded to the family estates in Priddy and Bath. The Bath estate was then about 50 acres. He married in 1896.

- (14) Devonshire Lodge on Bloomfield Road was probably built to serve Devonshire Cottage during the time when the entrance to the later was from Bloomfield Road. In the course of time when a new access from Wellsway was made the lodge would be redundant for its intended purpose and sold. The first O.S. 25" map for the area shows it is in its own grounds. It was not included in the sale particulars when Devonshire Cottage was on the market in 1857. There are armorial bearings in stone over the front door, the explanation of which is unknown. Changing lifestyles have promoted alterations, the last of which was done during the last two years. (**Early 1990s ??????**)

Devonshire House today is a replacement for the original. It stands on the corner on the junction of Wellsway with the link between Greenway Lane and Hatfield area on Wellsway. The public house called Devonshire Arms lies on the opposite side of the link road. Today it is a boarding establishment and antiques shop.(?????? and previously a grocers) It

succeeds a larger building constructed during the early years of the 19th century, at which time it was supplied with water from Upper Collins Well, already mentioned.

(15) The original house has an interesting history tied up with schooling, firstly for the more privileged scholar and later for the young offender under the Industrial Schools Act of 1866. In 1809 it was probably a new house when R.A. Lawrence advertised his Classical Boarding Academy. A classical education for young scholars was then the recognized key to learning, though a few more liberal academics did offer preparation for the Navy and Armed forces. For 20 years press notices for Mr. Lawrence's school offered "all Branches of a Liberal and Polite Education for males". It was accepted as being completely adequate. An advertisement in Bath Directory for 1819 mentions terms of 40 gns a year.

In 1829 Dr. B Cranknell D.D. of Montpelier Cottage, Lyncombe took over but not for long as he died in 1832. His widow sold the property to Henry Francis Brackstone of Allesley, near Coventry, subject to mortgage. It included the pasture land adjoining the garden, which was separately let. Very little is known of Henry F. Brackstone, save that he was a bachelor. In 1847, shortly after a lease was granted to Edward Luckman, he died. As he left no will the property was inherited by his brother, Robert Hugh Brackstone of Bath, and he was styled as a gentleman.

Edward Luckman took a 21 year lease in 1846. This man, born in 1801, was a successful schoolmaster, having lived in Bath for a number of years. From about 1830 he had conducted his own boarding and day school at 8 James Street, followed by a short period in Prospect Place. The move to Devonshire House signaled an expansion in his career. The 1851 Census reveals that he was 50 years of age, a schoolmaster born in Bath. Ann, his wife, was 44, born in Hinton Charterhouse. They had a family of seven, ranging from Elizabeth, 23, to little Horace, age 6. Their first born son, William, was described as an undergraduate at Cambridge. There were nine pupils, ages 10 to 15, and two servants living in. How many day scholars is of course not known. It is curious that in 1830 the address given was Entry Hill – perhaps the main entrance was on that side. No detailed description of the building or sketch has survived.

Edward Luckman's school continued until the lease ran its course in 1866 when, presumably, he retired. He was then 66. It was in the previous year of 1865 that he had the satisfaction of seeing his eldest son appointed as Chaplain at St. John's Hospital. It was a post which his son maintained until 1892.

Shortly before the lease of Devonshire House was due to expire came the proposition to turn the building into an industrial school for boys. Such establishments attempted to shield youngsters who had not fallen into crime but were vulnerable if no helping hand was given. Several categories of boys could be accepted. The formal lease of R.H. Brackstone, the owner to Ralph Shuttleworth Allen, M.P. and Philip Charles Sheppard in respect of the property was not dated until 1871, though the certificate for its opening was issued on July 19th 1866. The lease covered a period of 21 years determinable at the expiration of 7 or 14 years at a yearly rent of £60.

On the opening day in 1866 Devonshire House, now called The Somersetshire Certified Industrial Home for Boys was inspected by the Rev. Sydney Turner who was satisfied that it fulfilled the conditions specified by the Secretary of State in pursuance of Industrial Schools

Act of 1861. Inspections were carried out at intervals. One which survives on record shows that the boys were healthy, well cared for, and under sound discipline.

The school's introduction had been received with horror by certain residents in the immediate locality of Bear Flat, and it was vigorously opposed by Col. Hogg M.P. A memorial was presented to the Home Secretary in protest, but without success, though the promoters finally agreed to give up possession as soon as other premises could be obtained.

Eventually short term accommodation was found in Walcot and the lease of Devonshire House was given up in 1878. A purpose-built establishment was opened in Brougham Hayes in 1881.

*(Notabilia of Bath – S D Major 1879
 ??????? Home for Boys
 No. of inmates 74 on 30/9/1870)*

When the Industrial Home for Boys was moved to Walcot this spelled the end of the first Devonshire House. In 1878 William Cloutman, a surveyor of Bristol, purchased it for £450 from the surviving legatee of Robert H. Brackstone. He pulled down the house and then built a replacement with a terrace adjoining.

Devonshire Terrace built 1880 fronts on to Entry Hill. It consists of a row of half a dozen stone houses double-fronted houses of three storeys in height. There are bay windows on two floors looking over Lyncombe Vale, which until recent years presented a rural aspect. The gardens are also on that side. The backs are directly on the pavement of Wellsway and today are numbered on the main road side. Three bear numbers on the Entry Hill side which indicates that there have been alterations into flats or apartments.

Devonshire Villas comprises four 4 storey stone built houses, terraced, with a continuation of three storey ones. Each has a very small garden fronting on to Entry Hill where it leaves the Wellsway. They appear to be contemporary in date with the Terrace already described. The 1880's marked a very big expansion in building development for personal occupation in Bath. It indicates a time of economic optimism. It was also influenced by Bath Council which took over many private waterworks and absorbed them into the municipal control. It was the time when the Monkswood reservoir at the top of St. Catherine's Valley was built to supplement the couple in Chilcombe Bottom, near Batheaston. Thus the new housing developments were assured of an accurate and fresh water supply piped to every home.

Devonshire Arms in Forefield Place fronts on to Wellsway. Early maps of Bath show that it was once an entirely different shape to that seen today, which is probably explained away by the public house having been a brewery. There appears to be no connection with the Dukes of Devonshire as might otherwise be assumed from the armorial bearing displayed outside the building. The likely derivation of the name comes from the other various places with that name in the vicinity and also from a field on Beechen Cliff. It was called Dallimore's or Devonshire Field / Ground. Several people called Dallimore occur in the 18th and 19th centuries as an examination of the parish registers show. One was John Dallimore whose house in 1787 as detailed on a map of that date was the site of the later Holloway Farm, off the A367 on Bear Flat. (Today the farm has been swallowed by suburbia, but the outbuildings remain as a workshop unit.)

The earliest reference to the Devonshire Arms found to date is a mention in the 1860 Bath Directory. An earlier public house called the Coach and Horses existed in the vicinity.

Devonshire Tunnel which passes under the Devonshire Arms and several other houses around is unnoticeable by the casual passer-by. It was constructed in 1874 for the Somerset & Dorset Railway which ran for about 90 years from Green Park station to the south of England. It was affectionately called the “slow and dirty” though all acknowledged that it was a very useful link in high summer of the railway age and that the route went through very attractive country. From the Bath station it describes a large loop through the southern suburbs of the city and then passed under Lyncombe into Lyncombe Vale by means of the Devonshire Tunnel. To day the line has been made into a linear park from the Lower Bristol Road as far as the Devonshire Tunnel. The tunnel itself is sealed, though it is said (but not confirmed) that for some time the tunnel was open and used for the growing mushrooms. When the construction was built it affected the water table. Many of the springs in vicinity were diminished in quantity. A Bath Council Minute of 7th July 1874 record a water committee appointed to treat with Somerset & Dorset Railway Company for the purchase of water running from the tunnel.

Sources:

- Page 1: (1) BRO George Collection, Box No., 6 Bundle 100.
- Page 2: (2) BRO Building Control Plans
 (3) SRO DT/ba 24 Acc 4/10.
 (4) SRO DD/SAS C - 212 1799 (a).
 (5) See (1) above.
- Page 3: (6) Bath Ref. Lib: Somerset, Historical Descriptive & Biographical. T.H.S. Escott, 1908.
 (7) Mates Country Series, pp1 and 22. ???????
 (8) Historical Guide to Combe Down, etc., A. Richardson & D.C. Pitcairn, 1924.
 (9) Widcombe and Lyncombe Parish Register.
 (10) Nottingham Hallward Lib: Follows Collection M 4348. ??????
 (11) Bath Journal, May 14, 1857.
- Page 4: (12) BRO Bath City Council, History of Bath Waterworks, 1878
 (13) See Nos. (6) and (7) above.
 (14) Bath Ref. Lib: maps.
 (15) Bath Street Directories.
- Page 5: (16) Bath Chronicle, July 7/1824.
 Deeds by courtesy of owners of Devonshire House.
 (17) “Bath’s Provision for children of the Perishing and Dangerous Classes”, 1848-1880’s, N.Taylor, 3rd ed. WEA class 1979-1981.
 (18) See No. (16).
 (19) 1840 Tithe Map for Lyncombe & Widcombe, with computation roll.
 (20) BRO: Ralph Allen’s Reference Book.