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PREFACE

The printed version of this book came out in 1994. All copies of this print run have been sold and it thus seemed proper to replicate the History on-line so that it can be available to all interested parties. What follows is that printed version, with various updates included as blue text within square brackets.

James Briggs. June 2003

In July 2004 an updated edition of the book was published by the Frenchay Village Museum. Copies are available from them.

James Briggs. July 2004

This A5 printable version October 2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am clearly indebted to many people for the source material in this book; two however stand out. They are Vera Wilson and John Sage. Vera gave me her personal permission to use her book and photos. John Sage died in May 1993 but his widow, Beryl, was delighted for John's material to be used. Bristol Record Office gave permission to quote the 1931 brochure. Other authors willingly gave permission and I am indebted to John Penny for helping me contact the authors of the various books that he quoted to me. I had no idea how to contact the author of 'Medicine under Canvas', nor the family of Lott Broaddus Bloomfield; however I guess that they too would be pleased at the use of their material so late after it was written.[see relevant sections for updates]

Without the sponsorship of one of the Postgraduate Endowment Funds at the hospital this book would never have been published. An initial quote for 500 copies came up with a figure of £3,000. Eventually a cheaper quote was obtained but, nevertheless, the cost

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ran well into four figures. All 'profits' from sales will go back to the Fund.

The drafting of the text was made on my personal word processor with the enormous help of the loan, over one weekend, of £10,500 worth of computer equipment from my son-in-law's employers (Formscan Ltd., Frome, Somerset). This equipment included a flat-bed optical scanner and appropriate programs which allowed whole documents to be copied from the scanner and put into my word processor without typing a single word. Without this help I don't think that I could have faced the task of typing everything myself - I'm a two finger typist only!

James Briggs
Bristol
September 1994

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INTRODUCTION

I came to the hospital as a Consultant Histopathologist at the beginning of 1966. I soon learnt that there was a huge amount of history associated not only with the buildings, but also with the land on which it was built and the area in which it lay. In the late sixties I started to take photographs of the changes on the estate; over the next 25 years or so I took several hundred pictures. People became aware of my interest and gave me the opportunity to copy photographs that they had taken years earlier, long before I had arrived. I also collected documents, often in the form of photocopies because the originals were rare, or even unique. Over the years I came to learn ever more about the background of the place.

Happy chance meant that two of the secretaries in the department of Histopathology where I worked had personal or family connections that went back many years. Gladys Caseley had been a nurse at the hospital and married one of the sons of Sam Caseley, the hospital engineer; Denyse Botteley was related to Violet Hallett, one of the Matron's maids in the 1920s. Family photo albums produced little cameos of life and work right back to the start of a hospital on the site.

In 1981 we celebrated our fifty years with a 'Golden Jubilee'. It was only some time later that I realised that we were ten years too late! It was not in 1931 that the hospital opened, but in 1921, when what had been an elegant Georgian family house was purchased by the Corporation of Bristol in order to turn it into a children's TB sanatorium.

However, 1981 spurred the then Matron, Vera Wilson, to publish privately her booklet on the history of the hospital. This was on sale at the time for the princely sum of £1.00. In it were wonderful details of the evolution of the village, the estate and the buildings. Especially intriguing to me were the details that she had culled from

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the official reports that went back to the U.S.A. in World War II, when most of the facilities had been used as a military hospital. The American commanders were required to submit annual reports of the activities during the preceding year. These documents were naturally 'top secret', but became declassified and available for study after the War. Also available were half a dozen or so U.S. archive photographs, some of which were panoramas of the hospital - delights indeed!



Sam Caseley, Hospital engineer (back left), Gladys Caseley (front left), other family members and a friend, together with Miss Bowyer, Headmistress of the Sanatorium School (front right). Around 1947

I slowly got to know more and more of the history and met more and more people with unique memories, especially in 1992 when a group of us in the hospital managed to arrange a reunion of U.S. veterans to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of their first arrival in 1942. More photographs came out of the past accompanied by more memories.

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This book is a compilation of what I have learnt and gleaned over the years. Without the help of innumerable people, on both sides of the Atlantic, it would be a very slim volume indeed. As it is, I hope that it represents a reasonably comprehensive account of what I set out to do - record the way things were and became.

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THE EARLY DAYS

The evolution of the village and its surrounds is an integral part of the story of the hospital itself. It is difficult to better Vera Wilson's description of the start of things:

Frenchay village was one of many small settlements that grew up on the banks of the River Frome. Earlier settlers used the fast-flowing water for their crafts and industries, and pennant sandstone has been quarried from the river banks since the Roman occupation.

The infant Frome runs westward out of Sodbury, for approximately three miles, to Frampton Cotterell where it turns southward to flow to Winterbourne. At Hambrook it is joined by the Bradley Brook. It then continues its journey skirting the old village of Frenchay and flowing onward through Stapleton before reaching the City of Bristol.

The name Frenchay is thought to be a corruption of Fromeshaw which means a small wood by the Frome. The spelling of the name has changed from time to time. The village was recorded as Fromscawe in 1257, Froomshaw in 1397 and Fremshawe in 1436. The Winterbourne Register occasionally refers to it as Frenchhay.

The village grew in three stages. The first inhabitants built their cottages deep down into the valley, extending up the hillside to the higher ground. The second stage in the growth of the village occurred in the latter part of the seventeenth century when religious dissenters fled to the relative peace of the Gloucestershire countryside as a place of refuge against persecution

The third stage mentioned involved the expansion of the community into the elegant Georgian one that today dominates the area around the Common.

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The Quakers and Unitarians built elegant new houses on the high ground around the Common or converted cottages and farmhouses to accommodate their families. Many of these dwelling places are occupied today. Frenchay House and Clarendon House have recently been converted into residential homes for elderly citizens, and the Manor House has been a children's home for several years. Several other Georgian houses are privately owned.

One of these new houses grew over the next century and a half to become what is known in the 1990s as the 'Trust Headquarters' but which earlier had been the 'District Headquarters' and before that the 'Sisters House'.

Alan Grynyer, Works Officer, produced the following résumé in the 1980s:

FRENCHAY PARK (SISTERS HOUSE)

CHRONICLE

(Certain of the entries of this chronicle remain in part unsubstantiated)

Before c.1780

Original tenure (or holding) possibly earlier dwelling house was held by one Fitzherbert Yeoman.

c.1780

Evidence suggests that one Esther Phelps of Dursley paid a William Perry £1,200 for the messuage formerly in the occupation of Ann Wraxall on 4th July, 1778. It appears that Perry maintained a land holding on the site which he subsequently passed on to one H. Harford on 7th July, 1779. Later in that same month, 30th July to be precise, William Perry was paid a further £1,040 by Harford for 'a messuage erected but not finished on the site of the messuage'.

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Frenchay Park Mansion (The Sisters' House) circa 1930 - now Trust
HQ

1780 - 1813

House owned by Alderman Deane on whose death in 1798 the property was sold to Hugh Vaughan who in turn died in 1813 when the property was conveyed to George Worrell.

1813 - 1840

During this period George Worrell added two wings to the original house. He died in 1840 whereupon his wife continued to live in the house until her death in 1864.

1864 - 1887

The estate passed to William Tanner and subsequently to his son (W.G. Tanner). It was during the early part of this period that the house was further enlarged to its present configuration which would have included the addition of the Stable Block. The house then became known as FRENCHAY PARK, when previously it had been known as the 'Big House' of Frenchay Common. N.B. It is likely that successive owners had increased the land holding by 'taking-in' surrounding common land.

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1887 - 1921

During this period W.G. Tanner sold out to one Captain W.H.P. Jenkins who in turn leased the estate to a J.A. Taylor and Another for 3 years. J.A. Taylor and Another then assigned the lease to Cosmos Consolidated Ltd. with an option to purchase. In April, 1921 a Captain W.R.H. Jenkins (presumably the son of Captain W.H.P.Jenkins) and Cosmos Consolidated Ltd. conveyed the estate to a Victor Osmond who in turn sold the property to the Corporation of Bristol in July, 1921.

[A relative of the man who was the butler in the house at the time told me that Capt. W.H.P. Jenkins married his nurse. When he died he left all his money to his wife and the house to his son (W.H.R.) by a previous marriage. With no money, the son was forced to sell the house].

1921 - 1931

The Bristol Corporation upon acquisition opened the house for 35 in-patients (sanatorium and orthopaedic hospital for tuberculous children). In 1931 the Frenchay site had taken a fresh dimension with the completion of purpose built ward accommodation (Blocks 28, 29 and 30 as we know them). It was at this time that the house was converted into an administration centre with accommodation for the resident medical officer, matron, 6 sisters, 21 nurses and 12 maids. At the same time the West Wing was altered to provide an additional floor.

1949/50

Structural problems identified in front façade resulting in the installation of structural tie rods.

1977 - 1983

Evening Post 29th March, 1977- 'Staff moved from "danger" hospital'. As a result of substantial structural deterioration remedial work commenced. Various contracts were let (Phases I, II, III & IV totalling £250,000); the latter of these phases included elements of

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alteration. During this period the residential accommodation provided within the house was greatly reduced until finally in September 1983 the 'Sisters House' became the District Headquarters as we now know it.

1984

On the 23rd July, 1984, the Stable Block was officially Listed as being a building of special architectural and historical interest. Similarly, Sisters House (formerly known as Frenchay Park) was Listed on 3rd August, 1984.

Although there are no early plans of the house, a number of descriptive abstracts exist and these are appended below.

- (i) The Sisters' House is the Georgian Frenchay Park Mansion, the biggest of the old houses in Georgian Frenchay.
- (ii) A three-storeyed building with ashlar front, five bays, with moulded architraves to the windows, chamfered quoins, a balustraded parapet supporting eight carved urns, a porch with Ionic columns and two-storeyed three bay, bows on either side(1804).
- (iii) The ashlar front has three storeys and five bays with moulded architraves to the windows, chamfered quoins, a balustraded parapet supporting eight carved urns, and a porch with Ionic columns. Two storey three bay, bows either side. The main block has panels under the window sills all joined vertically. The hall is panelled. Contemporary staircase with twisted balusters.
- (iv) STABLE BLOCK - mid C19 rubble, freestone, brick dressings, double Roman tile roof. Two ranges at right angles. Principal range: Two storeys, five windows, central door in round-headed rusticated surround, similar surrounds to windows with cast iron glazing bars, at each end a large elliptical arch, that to right open, that to left contains lower opening now blocked, first floor dressed pitching eyes with keystones, small brick dressed eye to right of open arch, hipped roof; plain left range has one small, one large gabled extension; at rear only wall remains of third side of courtyard.

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(Extract of listing dated 23rd July, 1984)

(v) SISTERS' HOUSE - House, now offices. Mid/late C18, extended early C19 Ashlar, slate roofs. Main block, 3 storeys and attic, 5 windows, later wings, 2 storeys, 3 windows in cylindrical bays, all windows are glazing bar sashes, central Ionic glazed porch, fanlight over door behind, windows of main block have moulded architraves joined vertically by fielded panels, end rusticated pilasters rise to cornice below tall parapet with balustrade, newels and urns; later wings, moulded architraves, cornice and low parapet, break forward at outer edge to rusticated corner pilaster with urn; these wings return plainly around earlier house, they are joined at rear by a later low wing to make an undistinguished garden front. Interior: panelled entrance hall, fluted square columns, Doric cornice, marble floor with black dots; 3 floor open well staircase, moulded handrail, turned and barley sugar balusters; early C19 rear staircase off vestibule, top lit, and with Ionic columns. (Extract of listing dated 3rd August, 1984).

Additional to the above details is the fact that the house and estate was auctioned on June 22nd 1905. I had donated to me the auction prospectus(now in the Monica Britton Hall of Medical History at the hospital). This showed that the estate then measured 70 acres 2 rods and 4 perches. It consisted of Kitchen Garden, The Orchard, East Park, Pleasure Grounds, Home Park (including Entrance Lodge and Drive), Mansion, Grounds and Outbuildings, etc, Plantation, Garden, Nath Park, Home Park (including West Lodge and Cottage). The prospectus details the various facilities, including a 'noble dining room' in the house which, itself, was described as a 'Family Mansion'. The auction was arranged by the firm of solicitors Oswald, Ward, Vassal & Co of 41 Broad Street, Bristol. The successor of the firm still existed in the late 1980s but, unfortunately, they were not able to ascertain from their records the price which the sale achieved.

[Bill Mustoe reminded me in December 1994 that it was he who had donated the auction prospectus. He had had it given to him by a Mr

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Brown of the local smallholding family with land still opposite the hospital. Mr Brown had had an interest in the 1905 auction. When he handed the prospectus to Mr Mustoe he apparently said: "I could have had the whole lot for £17,000!". Bill Mustoe died on 15th March 1996 aged 92]



West Lodge,
circa 1910

The firm of Cosmos Consolidated has an interesting history in its own right. In fact it unwittingly made a major contribution to the economy of Bristol. John Penny, of the Fishponds Local History Society, gave me the following story:

At the outbreak of World War 1 the firm of Brazil Straker located in Lodge Causeway, Fishponds, were manufacturing Straker Squire cars and lorries. Their excellent engineering capabilities (having produced an number of successful racing cars pre-war) came to the notice of

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the Royal Naval Air Service who soon charged them with re-designing and producing their American made, and notoriously unreliable, OX-5 aircraft engines. A contract to produce Rolls-Royce aircraft engines under licence soon followed and over 300 French Renault engines were also manufactured, bringing their total wartime output to rather more than 1500 complete engines plus a much larger quantity of spares.

During 1917 the R.N.A.S. drew up a specification for a static radial engine, with air cooling, having a diameter not greater than 42 inches, a weight not greater than 600lbs and a maximum power of not less than 300hp. Straker Squire decided to enter the competition and their Technical Director, Roy Fedden, together with L.F.G. 'Bunny' Butler, the Chief Designer, swiftly created the 300hp 'Mercury', only to be followed later in the year by the world beating 450hp 'Jupiter'.

In 1918 and 1919, to Fedden's distress, the Bristol Straker group was progressively dispersed with the Fishponds works being bought by a newly-formed Anglo-American financial group called Cosmos, which had big interests in shipping and coal. Fedden was instructed by letter that his works was henceforth the Cosmos Engineering Co., and that he should carry on as before, but no Cosmos director came to see what was being done. Had they visited the factory they would have discovered not only the 'Mercury' and 'Jupiter', but also a little 100hp engine called the 'Lucifer'.

At the end of 1919 came the shocking news that Cosmos had gone into liquidation. The cause was a wild financial gamble on a colossal scale involving the sale of household goods to White Russia. Goods and ships were seized by the Bolsheviks, and Fedden suddenly found himself holding the Fishponds works for the Receiver. The Bristol Aeroplane Company at Filton then became interested and on July 29th 1920 purchased for £15,000, Fedden and whatever members of his engineering team were left, plus the goodwill, a promised Air

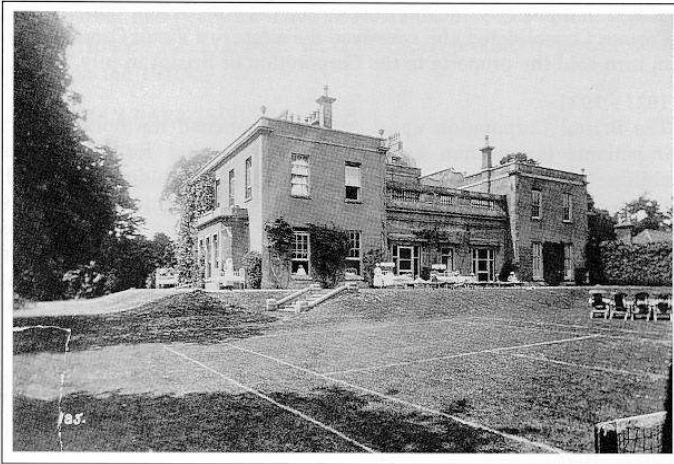
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Ministry order for 10 'Jupiters', all drawings, patterns, tools, 5 'Jupiter' engines, numerous parts, and 50 sets of raw material with a book value of £60,000. Thus was formed the Engine Department of the Bristol Aeroplane Co.

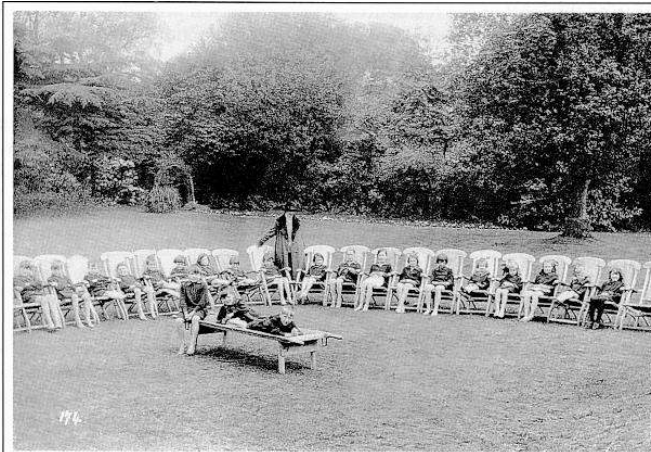
This was quoted from 'By Jupiter, The Life of Sir Roy Fedden', by Bill Gunston, Royal Aeronautical Society. The title gives away the fact that Roy Fedden was knighted in recognition of his skill as an engine designer. This skill allowed the Bristol Aeroplane Company to achieve international fame for their aero engines after World War 1.

Back to the hospital... In 1921 the Corporation of Bristol owned Frenchay Park. The house was out in the Gloucestershire countryside, which was the next best thing to Switzerland, there being no real treatment for tuberculosis other than fresh air and good food. And so the house was converted for use as a sanatorium for tuberculous children. Because the period of treatment was often measured in years, a school teacher was part of the staff, a tradition retained for very many years. For instance, the teacher when I arrived in 1966 looked after the children on the Plastics ward, some of whom had to stay for many months until their burns healed. Part of the adjoining lands continued to produce food, to such an extent that the sanatorium was almost self-sufficient. However, the number of patients increased and the house began to be too small. In consequence plans were drawn up for an extension to the sanatorium in the form of purpose built wards. Such planning started in 1927 and came to fruition in 1931. .

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The Sanatorium in the 1920s, with beds outside on the terrace.



Sanatorium children in the 1920s. The adult is almost certainly the school teacher.