

## **The Hawthorns: A History**

The building of the original house - called 'The Hawthorns' - and indeed Elton Road itself, came about through the efforts of Arthur Hallam Elton, who managed the Clevedon Court Estate for his father, Sir Charles Elton. This became his task until he succeeded his father in 1853 and of course, subsequently.

The Elton family bought the Manor of Clevedon in 1709, and are still here over 300 years later. During the first century of their stewardship, the Manor ran much as it had done for many hundreds of years, bringing in income from farm rents.

It was the first Sir Charles Elton and his father, the fifth Sir Abraham, who began to make changes. Before Sir Abraham's death in 1842, he had begun to develop land identified after the Clevedon Enclosure Act of 1799 as Manorial Waste, land which, because of its position along the steep sides of Clevedon many hills, had been unusable for farming.

Sir Abraham had already employed a surveyor to measure out building plots around East Clevedon in 1821, and the project was to continue along a pathway accessing and circling the Old Park on top of Dial Hill. This pathway was to be Highdale Road, leading to Hill Road and in turn, Wellington Terrace. To this was added The Beach and Copse Road in 1828, more or less completing Regency Clevedon, known as New Clevedon.

Previously, it had been impossible to develop the Hill to any great extent, partly because the usable farmland was leased out, and partly because the limestone underlying the Hill didn't retain water. Very few houses were built there before the 1820s.

The first additional housing in the early 1800s had been built by Clevedon builders for local people – mainly to expand the existing housing stock in a way that hadn't been done for centuries. On the Hill and on The Beach, however, the housing was speculative, a difference that made it worthwhile laying out money on digging wells. The houses had provision as well for the collection of rainwater, a boon for laundry and bathing in such a hard water area as Clevedon.

With the growing fashion for the merchant classes in Bristol to move away from the city and their warehouses, and the perceived market for small and select boarding schools in a

healthy area, to which those serving in the East India Company could send their children, plots began to sell steadily to local builders. This brought in tradesmen from the small villages surrounding Clevedon and the population began to swell.

As the new houses were completed, with their modern facilities and excellent countryside views from the heights above the Village across to the South Wales Coast, the Mendips and the hills towards Dundry, they were rapidly snapped up.

Not all the houses were sold though, as the builders frequently installed their wives in them as lodging house keepers. By 1841, the Census shows that many of these lodging houses were popular with the comfortable merchant classes of Bristol, who moved their families to Clevedon for the entire summer. In this year, the Bristol and Exeter Railway, later the GWR, was open as far as Yatton. The Clevedon hotels, the Royal (1825), the York (1834) and the Bristol (1835), all laid on small, horse drawn omnibuses called brakes, which would wait for the incoming trains and bring guests into Clevedon.

Once all of the former waste ground plots had been developed, there was stasis for some time. The next move had to come when more land was available, which meant waiting for a leaseholder to die. This must have come about in the late 1840s, because by 1851, Arthur Elton had begun to lay out Bellevue Road, leading south from Hill Road to the dew pond (which now lies below the roundabout at Sixways).



The original Hawthorns in the 1940s (thanks to Gill Swinbanks)

There was instant interest. The Eltons had by then set up a brick works in Strode Road, which was capable of supplying excellent bricks. Previous to 1850, there had been a tax on bricks – with this now removed, their use was far less expensive. Much of the building continued to be in stone: the earlier building plots were sold under covenants that enforced the use of stone, to be covered with a good depth of render. That was mainly due to the fact that the stone for the house was quarried on-site. The plots were on slopes, in the main, and the house platform would need to be quarried out. The stone, being Carboniferous limestone, formed very irregular lumps, because it had no grain whatsoever. It looked better covered up altogether with a thick render.

However, Pennant sandstone from the Conygar Quarry on the north side of Court Hill supplied the need for a building stone that could be shaped easily into blocks and was pleasant to look upon. Building began along the east side of Bellevue Road, where there were extensive views across the Channel, and by 1855, Miss Sadler's Bellevue Boarding House, and several more large houses were taking advantage of those views.

On the opposite side of the Sixways dew pond, house plots were also selling well. Elton Road had been laid out there, and had the advantage that very little building could take place on the seaward side, because of lack of space. The plots on the inland side offered excellent views of Wales and with the land on the seaward side unsuitable for building, these views would never be obstructed. This was a huge advantage for developers and a great selling point.

Arthur Elton was determined to invest in the estate by encouraging the building of large houses, as well as building some himself, to bring in rental income. Another way in which the estate would benefit, was that every plot sold brought in an annual rentcharge, known as a Farm Rent, or Ground Rent. The amounts were small, but because the majority of the land in Clevedon belonged to the Clevedon Court Estate, the income was good when the Ground Rents were amalgamated. The more development, the better the income would be.

In Elton Road, Arthur Elton kept a plot for himself, and the remaining ten plots were advertised in September 1851 in the Bristol Mercury, to be sold by auction. There must also have been some land sold previously, as George Somerton had erected a pair of large semi-detached villas that year and was at work on a second pair. He had bought

the plots to each side of an old right of way where Victoria Road was later to be laid out.

The largest plot for sale was purchased by an ambitious local builder, Henry William Andrews. It measured over two acres, by far the largest plot of all, on which he built a house called Oaklands. It was right next door to the plot retained by Arthur Elton, also over two acres, where The Hawthorns was to be built. These two houses were completed in 1853, along with Henry Howard's Norfolk House. We envy the rateable value, which was £50 for The Hawthorns and £60 for Oaklands.

When the founding editor of the Clevedon Mercury, George Caple, sold the newspaper in 1885, he moved abroad and travelled, eventually landing in Australia. He often wrote of his time there in long letters, which also contained reminiscences of his childhood. In one of these letters, he said that he and his childhood playmates used to walk down to Old Church Hill from Copse Road, following the line of the coastal strip that became the Green Beach. Along the side of the path, he said, there was an old hawthorn hedge. This was the reason for The Hawthorns' name. He can sometimes be taken with a pinch of salt, but this story is confirmed by an entry in the Clevedon Local Board of Health Minutes for December 1856: 'moved & carried that the old thorn fence formerly bounding the east side of West Leaze be removed & the road made good to the ditch.' West Leaze is now known as Salthouse Fields, and Elton Road now follows part of the old eastern boundary hedge, just beyond The Hawthorns.

In June 1853, Sir Charles Elton died, leaving Sir Arthur to take the title of Baronet and to continue his excellent stewardship of the Clevedon Court Estate. Sir Arthur was already heavily involved in his building concerns, while also campaigning to bring about the formation of a Local Board of Health for Clevedon. This came about in April 1853, with Arthur Elton in the chair. The Local Board was the first form of Local Authority, only preceded by the Parish Vestry at St Andrew's Church, which had dealt with collecting Poor Rates and relieving poverty, as well as keeping the church itself in repair and making certain that the village school was well run. Justice was dispensed by the local JP, in the case of the Eltons this was done from the Justice Room at Clevedon Court.

There was no organised sanitation, no running water, no street lighting – none of the benefits we have nowadays. There was a long way to go before Clevedon became as civilized as it is today. With the rapid expansion of the town, sewage could not continue to

be managed as it had been. Here is what the Sanitation Report on Clevedon says:

*'Properly speaking there is no public drainage in Clevedon.*

*In upper Clevedon there is a main drain passing near the church [Christ Church], and another near Mr Copeland's shop [Hill Road/Copse Road corner]. These both run towards each other parallel to the Hill Road, and through the property of Sir Charles Elton; and after meeting at the lowest point; are continued to a reservoir in a field adjoining Hill Road. This reservoir had an overflow into a sewer which runs down to the Beach, the mouth of which is near the centre of the Parade; and above the ordinary high-water mark; though spring tides occasionally attain to it. It need hardly be added that this imperfect discharge of offensive sewage down the face of the cliff occasions a considerable stench at times.*

*This sewer was laid down principally at the expense of Sir C. Elton, but the houses along it greatly contributed to it. All the houses along the line of it have the right of drainage into it; and, they all, in fact, do so. This sewer was constructed three or four years ago, and has been annually emptied of the manure.*

*All the houses in upper Clevedon do not drain into the above sewer.*

*There is another drain running from Mr Copeland's through the copse, and down by some gardens into the reservoir above mentioned, which accommodates the houses in that quarter. This drain was constructed out of contributions amongst the owners of several properties.*

*There are other houses in upper Clevedon, as in Wellington Terrace, which drain directly into the sea; each house separately. This point is considerably above the level of the sea, and the refuse matter from the various houses are brought to the edge of the cliff where they are left to decompose, or find its way down its sides to the beach as best they may. The nuisances resulting from this state was much complained of. In one case alluded to by Dr. Frowd the nuisance is aggravated by the drain stopping a few feet short of the edge of the cliff, the consequence being that the matter accumulates, instead of running off. On the other*

*hand, some of these private drains, it was suggested, were continued all the way down to the sea. The Hotel drains directly down the face of the sea wall. The houses on the parade have mostly separate drains discharging on the beach, above the high water mark; some being continued to half about tide level; but, however conducted thither, the discharged privy soil and other refuse occasions, at times, but especially in the summer season, an intolerable nuisance on the beach.'*

Hardly the delightful fresh air and healthy atmosphere expected of a seaside resort. In the Village, there were no drains whatsoever. The improvements brought about by the introduction of the Board were manifold, and during the ensuing years a Water Board was set up, slaughterhouse built, a Gas Board and in due course, mains electricity made its way here, though that didn't arrive until the twentieth century.

It says much for Sir Arthur Elton's energy and public spirit that much of what he accomplished was for the benefit of the working classes as well as for his own benefit.

All through the beginning of 1853, Arthur Elton's diary entries record almost daily visits to the 'Harp Bay house', as he calls The Hawthorns. By February, he is marking out the boundary fence and planning the garden and shrubberies, marking out flowerbeds and later taking part in the planting himself. He contacts the architects for the house, Pope and Bindon of Bristol, regarding the difficulty of sweeping the chimneys. He buys garden seats from Mr Cottle, the local carpenter. He looks at the possibility of installing a hot water system there. Orders go out for the fence to be painted, and for attention to be given to the well. By the middle of May 1853, the house is almost finished. On May 26<sup>th</sup>, a Mr Laverton calls to give an estimate for furnishing the house. On June 20<sup>th</sup>, he says, 'Laverton called with estimate for furnishing Harp Bay House. £49 not including china, glass lamps & other small matters.'

It is not until August 12<sup>th</sup> that the well is sunk, having reached by then a depth of 25 feet. Then there is painting and papering to be decided upon. By September he is choosing firegrates and paying for iron goods. In the middle of that month, he insures Harp Bay House, alias The Hawthorns, for £1,500. Laverton's men were furnishing the house on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September. The well was still being dug, and water was putting in appearance by October 5<sup>th</sup>. On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, the water cistern had to be pumped out because the water

was polluted. In early November, the site for stables was being marked out. He and his family spent two months there and found that the chimneys were smoking and walls were damp.

By February 1854, he was arranging for gates to be placed at the back of the house. Chimneys were swept and tried. There was still damp on some walls, and he and Mr Bindon knocked a hole in one of the walls to try and trace the cause. He settled the site for the stable yard and so on, and then comes a gap in his diary until December 1854. However, the house was rated at £50 per annum at the October Vestry meeting for St Andrew's Parish, Clevedon, so would be then have been complete.

In June 1853, Sir Arthur had entertained William Fry of Bristol and his two unmarried daughters at Clevedon Court. He had since then been in touch with several other potential tenants for the Hawthorns, apparently without success. It seems that the Frys moved in in 1854, one imagines much to Sir Arthur's relief after having finished the house at last.



William Fry was from a great Quaker dynasty. It was his uncle, Joseph Fry, who founded the well-known chocolate business. William Fry's father, also William Fry, had founded a banking service and tea company, which William joined, along with his brother, Joseph. When William lent too much money to his wife's family in 1812 and precipitated a crisis in the family's bank, it was Joseph's wife, Elizabeth, who called in the help of her own family, the Gurneys, who did what was needed to rescue the bank. She was, of course, Elizabeth Fry, the famous philanthropist and prison reformer. Repeated monetary crises eventually brought Fry's bank down.

William lived on the income from invested money. He moved into The Hawthorns in 1854 with his daughters, Elizabeth and Lucy, who remained there after his death in Clevedon in 1858. Lucy died in 1865, after which Elizabeth retired to Clifton, where she died in 1881.

Sir Arthur's next tenants were Captain Frederick Parr, late of the 54<sup>th</sup> (West Norfolk) Regiment of Foot, and his wife Clara. Captain Parr had served in India before leaving the

army in 1841. He was a keen and well-travelled natural historian, and had albums on Madeira fish, plants, ferns, this one of plants containing 47 drawings made by himself and coloured, as well as 300 specimens of the ferns.

He also had albums illustrating Indian wildlife, filled with coloured illustrations made for him by native artists who travelled with him into dense forests, staying in tents pitched with great difficulty. South American plant drawings formed more of his collections.

The Captain also contributed hand-drawn vignette titles pages to each volume of, 'The Bengal Sporting Magazine, or Eastern miscellany of Oriental field diversions and natural history of the game denizens of India', published from 1833-42. In addition, he had formed an extensive collection of British coins, unique in containing a connected series from the earliest times to his own. He auctioned the collection in August 1871 in London, where it fetched some £1,100. In the November of that year, he died.

The Parrs had two sons, F C Walter Parr, who lived until 1899, and Claude, who died at the age of nineteen in 1879. Walter was a help to the Band Committee, a body formed to raise financial support for the bands engaged during the summer months to play at a variety of locations in the town. This was before the erection of the bandstand on the Green Beach in 1887.



*Photo by Edwin H. Hazell, Clevedon.*

*The Public Hall.*

There were two reports of these events in the Bristol Mercury. In 1883, with a group of friends, he hired the Public Hall at Sixways and gave a concert of songs, together with short scenes from plays and some recitations. The evening was apparently very much enjoyed. Two years later, Walter had persuaded his mother to open her gardens for the Band Committee on a fine September evening. Some five hundred people attended to take part in the dancing, lit by Japanese lanterns and glow lamps, to music by the Cheltenham band. Balloons were sent up at intervals, and the grounds were lit up with coloured fires. The Liberal candidate for North Somerset, Mr Edward Strachey, attended with his wife and some friends. The evening finished around 10 in the evening, with a hearty vote of thanks to Mr Walter Parr for organising such 'rational and harmless entertainment'. Mrs Parr remained at the house until 1890, when she moved to The Grove in Walton Road.

Sir Arthur found another tenant for The Hawthorns in retired draper, John Cordeux, who had had an extensive business in Bristol. His business was described as being as good as 'a visit to one of the most gorgeous bazaars in the Orient'. He had set up his first shop in the 1860s in St James Barton in Bristol, moving from there to Clifton to set up a very large establishment in Merchant Street and Regent Street, with an enormous workroom, vast warehouse and accommodation for staff above. He imported a great many exotic goods from abroad, hence the atmosphere of the bazaar.



**JOHN CORDEUX**  
 AND SONS, LTD.,  
**CLIFTON,**  
 The Popular High-class  
**DRAPERS**  
 For the West of England.

**Cash** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Postal Order Dept.**

Whatever you want please order from us. We send carriage paid to any address. Parcels value 20/- and over.

ALL PATTERNS FREE.

The best Cutters and Fitters money can command.



Mr Cordeux was a man with a strong faith, and supported many Christian good works, in particular the Copse Road Chapel. He lived at The Hawthorns until March 1894, when he moved to a more modest house in Victoria Road, Baycliff. During his time in Clevedon he built houses in Victoria Road, Queens Road and Old Street, as well as shops in Alexandra Road.

Thomas Turner Chard came to rent The Hawthorns next, a corn and seed merchant, later producer of cattle cake. He was the son of Thomas Chard, a Taunton man who trained as a baker and moved into selling corn in Bristol. In 1892 and 1893, Thomas Turner Chard had been given the ultimate seal of approval in his trade, Supplier by Royal Appointment, authority to use the Royal coat of arms. He was supplying cattle food to the Royal household, and you can imagine how his heart swelled with pride in his Victorian breast. He and his wife, Charlotte, stayed in Clevedon for over ten years; they are listed in the 1906 Directory. However, by 1911, someone quite different was at The Hawthorns.

Sydney Clarke-Hook was well-known in his day as one of the finest writers of stories for boys. His characters, 'Jack, Sam and Pete', had adventures all over the world, getting involved in many comic situations on their travels. The three featured in The Marvel comic from 1901 until 1922. He also wrote many school stories and others for Harmsworth, who published The Marvel.

When he came to Clevedon he was listed in 1911 as an author, as was his son, Herbert. He and his wife Alice were in their early fifties, and Herbert and his three younger sisters, Evelyn, Mabel and Sibyl, all lived at home with them, along with two live-in servants, Sarah and Emily Gould, cook and housemaid respectively, from Exford in Devon.

The couple had moved around England a great deal during their married life, living variously in Brixton, Hendon, Brentford, Acton, Brighton, Preston and St Helen's. In St Helen's in 1893, Sydney was recorded as a full time author in Sibyl's baptism entry. He had worked as a Spanish translator, a notary's clerk, an engineer and a Spanish corresponding clerk. By 1909 they had moved to Hastings, at which point Sydney placed an advertisement in the Evening Standard:

'WANTED to Rent, with option of Purchase, a gentleman's COUNTRY HOUSE, standing in secluded grounds of 2 acres, not isolated, near a good town, not clay soil, not less than 50 or more than 100 miles from London, unless having exceptionally fast service of trains; containing at least 3 rec., 6 bedrooms, bathroom (h. and c.); rent £50-£60 p.a., with option of purchase; freehold preferred; purchase would be made at end of first year if house found suitable. S. Clarke-Hook, Esq., c.o. The Property Editor, "The Standard".'

Evidently this led the family to The Hawthorns. They next moved to Poole, moving again to Bournemouth, where Sydney died in 1923.

The next phase in the history of The Hawthorns brought a very interesting character into the story. The house had become a hotel when an advertisement appeared in a pre-War town guide referring to The Hawthorns as, 'Formerly the residence of the Rajah of Sarawak.'



Sarawak is now a Malaysian State, which occupies the northern part of Borneo. The first Rajah was James Brooke, who founded the Raj of Sarawak in 1841, when he was ceded that territory as a reward for his assistance to the Sultan of Brunei in fighting piracy and rebellion among the indigenous peoples there. The Sultan of Brunei gave him the title of Rajah, and the family was known in England as the White Rajahs. He was succeeded by his nephew Charles in 1865. In turn, Charles' son Charles Vyner Brooke, known by his second name, succeeded to the title in 1917.

Their association with Clevedon came about when Vyner Brooke and his brother were sent back to England to attend preparatory school. Their father chose an excellent school, known throughout the West of England as 'Cornish's', but actually called Walton Lodge School. Vyner Brooke, the Rajah Muda, or heir to the rajah, attended to study Classics from 1885, before going on to Winchester. During his time at Walton Lodge he was in the same class as Bernard Elton, son of Sir Ambrose Elton of Clevedon Court. Vyner's younger brother, Bertram, the Tuan Muda, who could perhaps be referred to as the 'spare', joined him at Cornish's the following year.

The Cornish family had started their school in Baltonsborough near Glastonbury, when the Reverend C L Cornish took a few pupils into his home. He moved to Compton Dando in the Mendips for a time, and after his death he was succeeded by his son, Charles as head master. Charles died young and his brother the Reverend Stephen Cornish then took over the running of the school. By this time, the family had moved to Walton St Mary, setting up their school in Walton Lodge c1869, at the northern junction of Edgehill Road and Castle Road. The house was built by Robert Newton in 1867.

As the school grew in repute, the number of pupils rose to a startling eighty-eight boys. By the time the two Brooke boys joined, the school had expanded into the town houses adjoining Walton Lodge, Brasted and Castle Hill. Just to round off this diversion, Dr Basil Harwood (organist and composer) remembered from his time at the school that, 'The Cornishes were such delightful people – we were more like a happy family than a school. The family consisted of Mrs Cornish, Walter, Stephen and a younger brother, Theodore. There were three daughters, Joy, Ella and Daisy. Every night we were all kissed before going to bed.' What better thought than that on which to end the day.



The original Hawthorns - 1910

It seems that the way in which Vyner Brooke may have become associated with The Hawthorns would have been by later visiting Charles Agar Bampfylde, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. Bampfylde had acted as Political Agent for the Sarawak Government in this country on Charles Brooke's behalf, and had also written part of the story of Sarawak in collaboration with the Revd S Baring-Gould in, 'A history of Sarawak under its two White Rajahs.'

C A Bampfylde had acted as Resident of the First Division, Sarawak (1896-1903), and returned to Britain in 1903, acting as Charles Brooke's political agent from Blisland in Cornwall until 1912. It is likely that this is the point at which he moved to Clevedon for his retirement, where he died on December 25<sup>th</sup>, 1918 at The Hawthorns, aged 62. Earlier that year he had allowed a summer fete to be held at The Hawthorns in aid of the Hallam Hall Orphanage in Dial Hill Road. (Later this was run as St Edith's Orphanage, and is now apartments). He left just under £3,000 to his sister, Harriet Gertrude Bampfylde. She had lived with him in Cornwall, where they kept four servants and she is likely to have moved to Clevedon with him.

Mrs Walter Jones came to Clevedon with her older sister, Harriett Stansfeld after Mr Bampfylde's death, and rented The Hawthorns. She had married a barrister, Walter J Jones, but the marriage was pronounced null and void in 1888. In those days, divorce was a disgrace, and she gave her marital status as 'widow' in the census returns. She In June, 1926, the National Women's Conservative and Unionist Fete was held at the house with their permission, with dancing by pupils of a girls' school at Southview in Princes Road to the music of Mrs Pegram's Orchestra.

Mrs Pegram and her husband lived in Kenn Road. She was very interested in all things musical, and after the sad death of her daughter, Enid, in 1929 at only eight years of age, she and her husband set up a hall behind their house, where they could hold dances, calling it the Glenid Hall, combining the first two letters of Mrs Pegram's name, Gladys, with Enid.

On July 13<sup>th</sup> 1928, the Clevedon and District Conservative Women's Association Fete was held at The Hawthorns, attended by between 400 and 500 people. The Western Daily Press reported: During tea selections were played by Mrs Pegram's orchestra. Mrs Donaldson, (chairman), presided, and Mrs Gunning, (Shirehampton), spoke of 'Empire'.

Colonel Sturges introduced the newly-appointed chief Conservative agent for the Weston-super-Mare Division, Colonel Flemming, OBE, MC, who also addressed the meeting. In a play entitled 'A dream of Empire' a large number of members' children took part.

The grounds hosted various events, including in 1929, a country dance organised by Clevedon Girl Guides to raise money for the new HQ in London. In 1930 the house itself was used by the Clevedon Ratepayers' Association. Mrs Jones, was certainly helpful to many good causes and happy to lend her grounds and house when needed.

Mrs Jones died in 1931, and once again The Hawthorns was empty. Her remaining furniture was sold off at auction on the premises in August, including a longcase clock, oak hall chairs, oak cabinets, mahogany dining table and chairs, 6 foot mahogany sideboard, 4 foot mahogany bureau, oak pedestal writing desk, oak writing table, bookshelves, books, upholstered settees and easy chairs, china cabinet, occasional table and chairs, Dresden and other ornamental china, Crown Derby dinner service, glass, silver, EP goods, pictures, timepieces, bed and table linen, bedroom equipment, kitchen effects, greenhouse plants etc.

By this time, in 1931, there were few takers, it seems, for a large house in generous grounds. In 1932, a fundraising fete was held in the grounds for the RSPCA, presumably by permission of Sir Ambrose Elton, the owner. The times were such that a great many people had lost money in the economic slump following the Great War, and that it took some time to find a tenant. The answer seems to have been for the house to become a boarding house.

Now for the first full advertisement which appeared in the local guide book:

Green Beach, Elton Road, Clevedon

'Hawthorns'

Formerly the Residence of the Rajah of Sarawak

Standing in own grounds of 5 acres, immediately above the sea,  
near Bandstand and Littleharp Bay.

Tea lawns adjoining.

Secluded position yet close to town.

Large and comfortable Bedrooms on ground floor suitable for  
invalids and elderly people.  
Trained nurse always in attendance.  
Private suites if required.

All home grown produce. Large and small parties catered for.  
Garage accommodation. Highly recommended. Telephone 172.

Mrs Florence Curtis was the person who first marketed The Hawthorns as a boarding house, moving from a house called Glencoe in Gardens Road where she had also offered accommodation. It seems that Chinese whispers had circulated regarding the house's connection with Sarawak! However, that slight inaccuracy apart, it seems that Mrs Curtis had an eye for what was needed, to the point where she was offering very much what the new Hawthorns offers now.

Judging by the advertisements in the Western Daily Press, she was an innovative hostess, alive to the needs of a new form of traveller – the person who likes to go hiking and camping. In 1936, she was promoting holiday camps in May and June at The Hawthorns, 35/- weekly, camping sites for 7/- per week.

By the autumn of 1937, Mrs Curtis had decided to move on, and was advertising various surplus items for sale, among them a Frigidaire ice cream mixer and storer, as well as a Health-way weighing machine.

On October 16<sup>th</sup> 1937, the house was again advertised to let: 'To Let, The Hawthorns, Green Beach, Clevedon. Ideal Private Hotel or Boarding House, 4 reception rooms, level offices. 7 bedrooms. Lawns. Garage. Separate cottage. Right on sea front.'

Mr and Mrs Charles Childs ran the house next, advertising from 1937 onwards. His mother lived with them and died in Clevedon in 1938. The new lease on the house was to run for seven years from March 25<sup>th</sup> 1938. The Hawthorns (see picture) was still advertised as a boarding house in 1939, and the Register of England and Wales lists the occupants as being Charles and his wife – she is an unpaid domestic and he repairs automatic machines. Also at the house were a domestic help, Joyce Salmon and two ladies of independent means, Daisy Way and Margaret Bryan.

Edmund J Bride, the other boarder there contributed to Clevedon's history after the War by running his photography business from a little booth or hut on Salthouse Fields. Here he developed and printed the photographs he took for visitors. He settled in Clevedon with his wife Margaret and carried on working here as a photographer, we believe into the 1950s.

In 1946, an advertisement appeared in the Western Daily Press situations vacant column for two strong young girls to help in a small private hotel, giving The Hawthorns' address for responses. Three years later, Clevedon Urban District Council wrote in the same newspaper about an idea for taking over the house as a replacement for the Public Hall in Albert Road. They admitted that this would come as a surprise, as Sunhill in Princes Road had previously been agreed on. In the end the sensible choice was Sunhill, because it was far more central.

The Hawthorns was used as rented accommodation from the early 1950s until 1960, when it was compulsorily purchased by the Council. It was riddled with dry rot and was seen in those days as needing too much work on it to be worth saving. Geoff Hale, who lived in Springfield, one of a pair of houses nearby, recalls that it was demolished before he left Clevedon in 1961.

In that same part of Elton Road more large houses were demolished; the large pair to the side and rear of The Hawthorns, Springfield and Whitehall, stood until the 1980s. A house called Fairfield, to the right of The Hawthorns, was knocked down too, leaving a large open space used partly for car parking, partly for boat storage for Clevedon Sailing Club.

A further building in the area falling into serious disrepair was the old Haven Cafe. This had been built as a private house in the 1850s, variously named Frankfort Lodge, The Thatched House and Moreton Lodge while it was lived in. The cafe business fell away, it seems. It was a Council franchise, but with no takers for the business, the house was sold and became a public house, the Little Harp. It is now the only remaining house left standing in this part of Elton Road that was part of the 1850s thrust to develop the area.

By 1982, following the collapse of Clevedon Pier twelve years earlier, the iron framework of the buildings from the pier head had been removed and stored on the large plot of open ground left following the clearance of the houses. In the meantime the pier and the deck were taken down, and moved to Portishead Docks where they were repaired, and then replaced in 1989. While ashore, the pier buildings were carefully stripped of dozens of layers of paint by workers on a job creation scheme under the direction of Peter Moncaster. Following that, they were moved to Portishead Docks for repair, too.

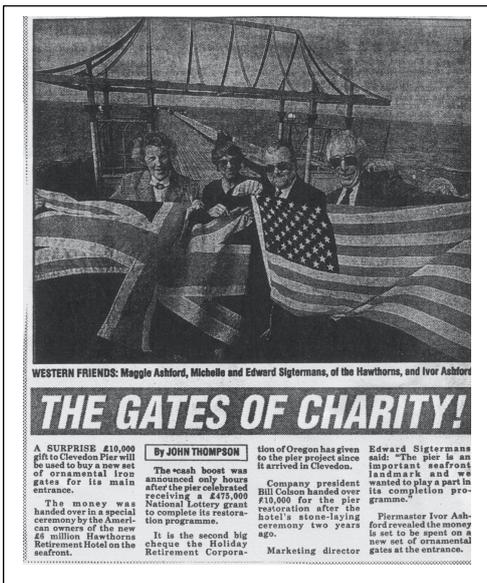


At that time, Frank Benatt of the Beach Pottery was running a fund raising shop on the lower floor of the pier tollhouse, selling books with local interest and works by local craftspeople. Examples of the metalwork from the pier head buildings were displayed on the upper floor. The contrast between sections left as they were found and areas cleaned back and coated with red oxide for preservation was striking. In 1991 permission was asked for one of the buildings to be replaced on the pier to demonstrate what would eventually stand on the pier head. This was granted. In 1989, the pier was back in place and was once again open to the public, albeit without the pier head buildings.

The site of The Hawthorns, Springfield and Whitehall had been cleared for the building of an entirely new concept in this country – a retirement hotel. Work began on the building of the new Hawthorns in spring 1994, financed by the Holiday Retirement Corporation of Oregon, already the owners of 130 hotels in America. Even before work started, the

Bristol Evening Post announced in February 1994 that the corporation was anxious to forge links with Clevedon, and that talks had been held between company president Bill Colson, the Pier Trust and representatives from Woodspring District Council, regarding the offer of a large donation towards the restoration of the pier. The company would follow this donation with more from fund raising work among its hotels in America.

In fact, what happened was that a day after laying the foundation stone on July 1 1994 at The Hawthorns site, Bill Colson visited the pier and was given a tour by Ivor and Maggie Ashford, the pier master and his wife.



As they reached the pier head, Bill turned to them and offered £10,000 of his own money towards the pier restoration. More recently, when the Visitor Centre on the pier was opened in 2015, Bill made another, even more substantial donation, notwithstanding that his direct connection with Hawthorns had ceased some time before. On a similar topic, the very first Community Benefit shareholder was a resident of Hawthorns - Mrs Sheila Rolls.

Even before the hotel was built, the aim of the Corporation was to form a close alliance with the pier. Eighteen months after the first donation of £10,000, the pier was to benefit in October 1995 by a further £10,000 from the Corporation itself, presented by Edward Sigtermans, the Corporation's marketing director. It was decided that this money would be spent on a new set of ornamental gates at the pier entrance.

By 1996, permission and funds were in place for the final phase of restoration on the pier head and buildings, and work began on the complete repair and restoration of the pagoda, lights and weather shelters early in 1997. This was completed and the pier held a triumphant opening ceremony, complete with a day and evening of events and the Band of the Royal Marines, on May 23 1998. The ceremony was performed by Sir Charles Elton and the town's world famous bowling champion, David Bryant, using the original silver padlock and key made by local jewellers, Rossiters of Hill Road. The new

gates were in place for this great occasion, and the new Hawthorns had played its part in this latest reopening of the pier.

Since then, close bonds have remained in place between Hawthorns (part of the Avery Group), and the Clevedon Pier and Heritage Trust, with both bodies working towards keeping the pier open and well-funded. Clevedon owes them both a great debt for their past care and continued efforts to keep our Grade 1 pier in good condition for the public, both local and visiting, to enjoy.

**Hotel chain aids restoration fund**

# U.S. GIANT TO HELP PIER



**POPULAR ATTRACTION: Clevedon Pier**

**By JOHN THOMPSON**

**AN AMERICAN company is to help pay for the restoration of Clevedon's Victorian pier, it was revealed today.**

The giant Holiday Retirement Corporation of Oregon, which owns 120 hotels in North America, has agreed to make a donation. The company will soon start work on a £6 million hotel on the town's seafront — its first in Britain. And it has pledged further sponsorship of the pier on fund-raising activities at its American chain of luxury hotels.

Today's announcement follows a meeting in Clevedon between company resident Bill Colson, the pier Trust and representatives from Woodspring District Council.

Corporation spokesman Stephen Stone said: "There will be an up-front cash donation, the amount still has to be finalised."

**Attraction**

"Company representatives will then look at ways of providing further money from fund-raising at the American hotels.

"We plan a close working relationship with the pier once the hotel, which will cater largely for the elderly, is completed.

"I am sure a walk along the seafront and then the pier will prove a popular attraction, particularly with our American visitors."

The cash boost comes a month after Woodspring district councillors agreed to hand the historic Victorian landmark a £250,000 rescue package.

Two spans of the pier collapsed during strength tests in October 1970 and it was reopened in May 1989.

Work on restoring it has cost more than £1.5 million so far.

But cash-strapped Clevedon Pier Trust needs to find £500,000 to save it from voluntary liquidation.

Woodspring has pledged half the money — if the trust can come up with the rest itself during the next three years.

Trust chairman Niall Phillips said today he welcomed the American company's interest.

"The money will go towards restoring the pagoda-styled pavilion buildings at the seaward end of the pier," he said.

"But there is still a lot of hard fund-raising to be done to find the remainder of the £250,000 we need."

Building work on the seafront hotel at the Hawthorns car park is due to start in two months time.

*E.P.  
24/2/94*

Jane Lilly

Local Historian