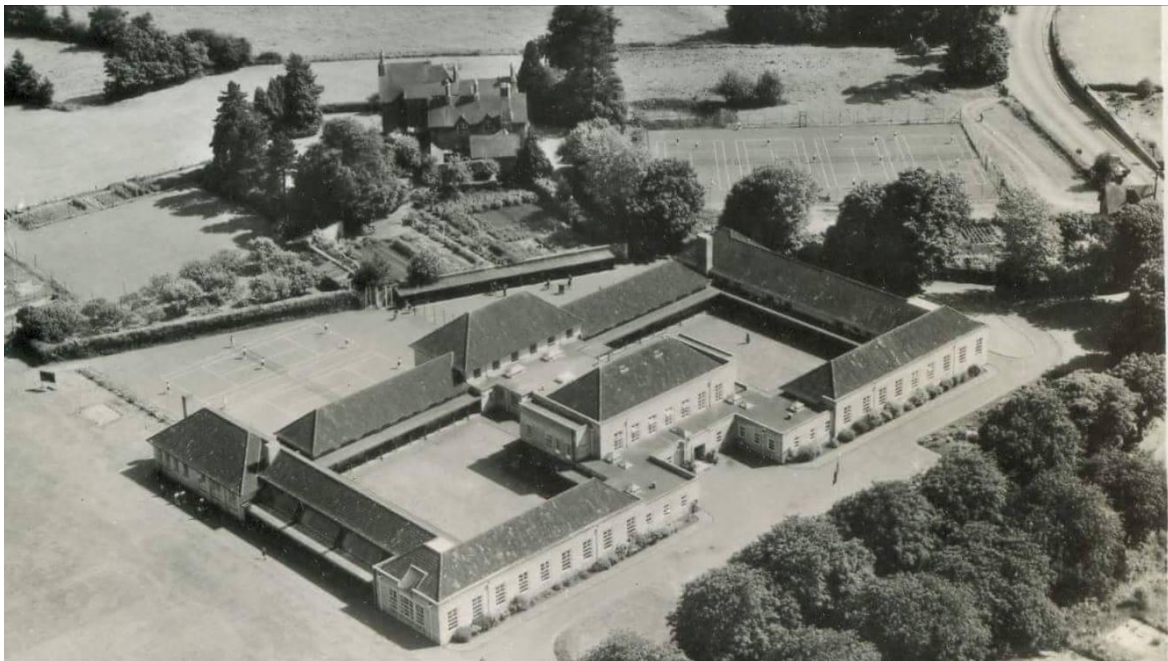


FROME COLLEGE 1921 -2021
A SHORT HISTORY



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FROME COLLEGE 1921 -2021 A Short History

Barry Bates (College Principal 1991-2008) with additional material from Roland Hurrell (teacher at FCC 1990 -2018), Barry Edwards (Frome Museum) and Malcolm Lloyd (Coordinator of Community Education at FCC (1998-2003)

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

I was privileged to serve the town as its College Principal for 17 years. When the centenary of the College approached in 2021, I worked alongside others to bring together the history of the College. During the centenary year, the Exhibition at the Museum encouraged the donation of College memorabilia. We had originally planned for our material to be published as a book. That has not happened, but we believe now is an important moment to draw together the story so far, not least because in 2021, there were still people who had a connection with those there in 1921. Our aim is to provide an overview which will help those who wish to explore the history of the College in the future. It is not intended for publication in its current form and there are just a few hard back copies.

There are original documents relating to the College history at the Somerset Records Office in Taunton and many excellent records at Frome Museum. The documents included in the appendices include some which will not be readily available in the Museums.

What is written here is designed to be freely available to anyone interested in the College and with the hope that others will use it as a base to continue recording the history of this wonderful institution. Inevitably it is but a small fragment of what has gone on over the century but, above all, I hope that we can pay tribute to the scale and breadth of the contributions which many individuals have made.

INTRODUCTION

Frome College today sits within a large campus on what is, despite recent developments elsewhere in Frome, the northern edge of the town. Always making the most of changes to the national and local education systems, it has offered educational opportunities to the town and local villages for over a century. From its earliest times, the institution has prided itself on being a caring community in its own right and at the heart of its own local community.

I wrote the following as part of the eulogy for John Fisher

Let's go back on a 50-year journey. It is 1966 – there is a grammar school on the outskirts of a market town, its pleasant grounds largely reserved for those selected to attend. Move to that same site in 1996 – A couple of years earlier the Daily Telegraph had featured the town

as its example of the decline of the English market town, but your view does not reflect that. It is 9.30 pm early autumn, you pause by ECOS, you may notice an event is taking place in the Theatre, the all-weather pitch is lit up with community hockey practice. Next door the Leisure Centre is still busy, particularly the swimming pool. Behind you there is the thudding beat of a local band using the music rooms for practice. Parents and children are leaving a parents' evening mixing with adults who have been at evening classes. It is the largest secondary school in Somerset, and it is Frome's Community College. It is easy for Frome residents to assume this happens everywhere.

1. Education in Frome in 1921

In 1921 Frome had an array of schools, some of which were attached to **Churches**. The National School system was set up in the nineteenth century by the Church of England and in Frome schools were attached to St John's, Holy Trinity and Christchurch. The British and Foreign Schools Society set up by a Quaker had helped to set up Vallis School. As the school leaving age went up, many of these schools extended to secondary age pupils. Oakfield (1941) and Selwood (1958) gradually emerged as secondary schools and the remaining schools became Primary and later First Schools. A number of these schools retain their original buildings e.g. Vallis. More can be read about these schools in Derek Gill's *Frome School Days*. Thus, the College (as the County Secondary school) would in 1921 be serving only a small percentage of the town's young people.

In addition, there were a range of **private schools** often with boarders. Derek Gill's book describes many of these, often based in some of Frome's larger houses. Many lasted only as long as their founding proprietor was able to keep them going. The Blue Coat School had been established as a Charity school in 1720. It occupied part of a site set up as an almshouse. It was a long-established school with fee-paying pupils on scholarships. The boys wore knee-length blue coats with brass buttons and tam-o'-shanter caps. This school folded on the opening of the County school and its boys transferred to the new County Secondary School.

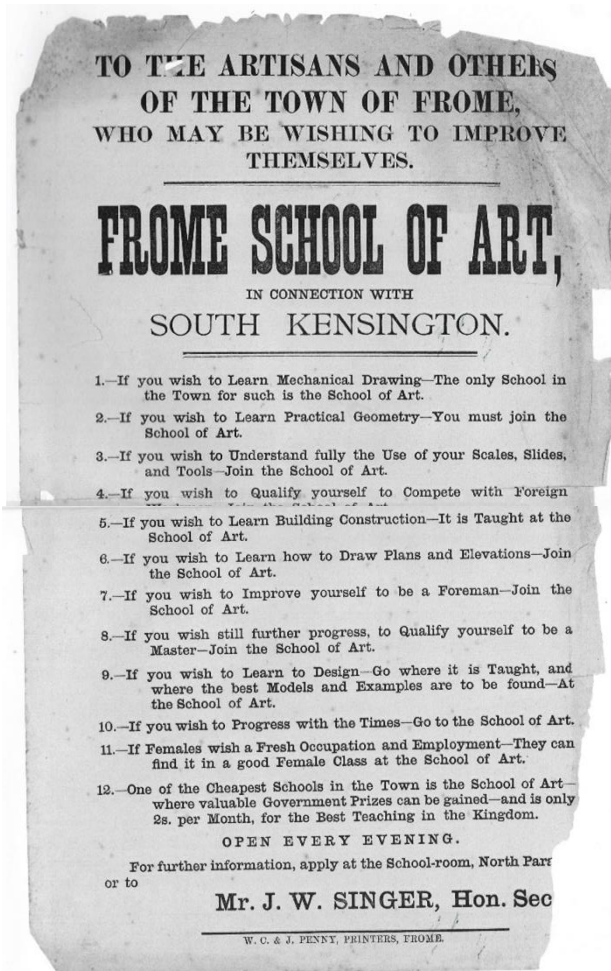
2. The Further Education College

Alongside statutory education, there is a long history of vocational education in Frome. Rarely properly funded by central government, Further Education (FE) has tended to struggle to establish itself in this country.

Prior to 1865 there were 2 organisations in Frome offering 'enlightenment' classes. The Mechanics Institute (opened in 1840) and the Literary and Science Institute (opened in 1844). Neither of these was really for working class people or for training.

In 1865 the **Frome College of Art** was founded by John Webb Singer. Although his father had died when Singer was 3, he created a foundry whose castings graced many cities. At one time Singer's employed 700 men. Singer was so determined to

set up his School he travelled to the government offices in South Kensington to obtain permission to do so. The first lessons took place in his house in Market Place. By 1870 the school was so popular it moved into new premises in North Parade.



In 1888 –the Local Government Act allowed local authorities to raise a rate to provide ‘technical’ education. The School of Art began a gradual change and, as the poster shows, offered courses in building construction, practical geometry and the like. Girls were invited onto courses if they ‘wish for a new occupation’.

In 1894 it became **Frome School of Art and Science**, and classes now included Shorthand and Chemistry.

In 1902 new buildings were opened. By the 1920’s the College offered vocational courses required by local companies. These included those skills needed in printing. (Butler and Tanner). Other classes e.g., dress-making and bookkeeping were also on offer.

A typical example taken from the workingmemoriesoffrome website

Daisy Bane left school at 14 and went to work setting up the looms at Houston’s cloth factory, a firm long gone, but remembered in the name of a Frome road – Houston Way. It was skilled work, preparing the looms for the weavers. It was a jolly place to work, with singing and sweets, and a sympathetic foreman, Alec Copley, whose wife made Daisy’s confirmation dress.

“I was a pattern-warper and my sister Melinda; she was a pattern-weaver. We went to the School of Art to learn our trade. Of course you had your pattern, and you had to read your pattern, but I can’t remember the patterns! I couldn’t read one, not now. It was very hard, mind, but I soon got into it. Every colour had a number. There was always one number I remember. That was 896 and that was Air Force blue. I always remember that number, I don’t know why.” DAISY BANE

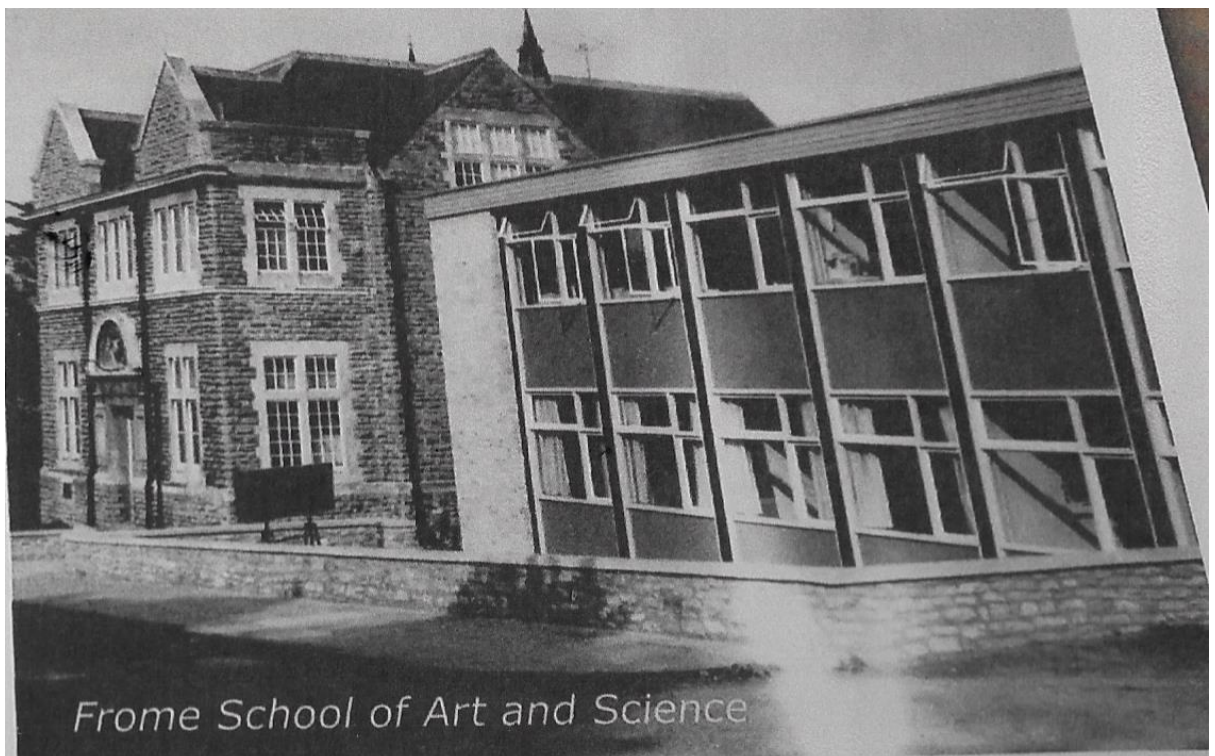
In the 1930's unemployed youths had to attend evening classes to get their employment benefit. Perhaps not surprisingly there are later reports of their poor behaviour.

By 1937, now known as **Frome School of Art and Technical Institute**, the College had broadened its vocational courses on offer to include engineering and training for the milk industry. There was also a tradition of courses of a lighter nature including folk singing and dancing.

After the Second World War, there was a constant pressure for new and improved facilities, often the result of criticism from Government inspectors. The Local Authority, however, so often failed to finance improvements. In 1950 there were demands on the College for courses in plumbing, welding, motor vehicle work, radio, gas fitting, electrical installation and the like. There was a close link between the College and local employers in a way which was lost nationally in the later years of the twentieth century and has yet to be recovered.

In 1953 it became the Frome Technical and Art Institute. A plan for courses in agriculture, to be supervised by Cannington Farm Institute near Bridgwater, were shelved through lack of support.

In 1962 it became **Frome Technical College** with 1000+ students and 9 acres were bought at Flints Farm for playing fields.



However, in 1968 it merged with Norton Radstock College as **North-East Somerset Technical College**. Any prospect of expansion appears to have ended when the 'playing field land' was sold. It makes one wonder whether more investment over time might have made the College more viable.

In 1973 a further crisis when the changes to local government in the area meant that Norton Radstock became part of AVON Unitary authority, and the two colleges were split. Deemed not viable to exist as an independent institution, Frome Technical College was attached to the new Frome Comprehensive School. (There is more on this in Chapter 6.)

In 1992 Somerset LA closed Frome's FE provision which meant that the nearest FE courses were in Trowbridge, Norton Radstock or Street.

3. The County Secondary School 1921 – 1944

Feb. 21st, 1920. Supplement to COUNTRY LIFE. xiv.

ESTATE AGENTS, VALUERS, MAPLE & CO. AUCTIONEERS, AND SURVEYORS. TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, LONDON, W.1. And at BRIGHTON and EASTBOURNE. Telephone: Museum 7000.

HYTHE.
OVERLOOKING THE WOODS AND COMMANDING SEA VIEW.
KENT COAST.—To be SOLD, this beautifully appointed medium-sized RESIDENCE. It stands in its own grounds, and contains:
12½ bedrooms, dressing room, three bathrooms, three reception rooms, billiard room.
ELECTRIC LIGHT THROUGHOUT.
CO.'S WATER AND MAIN DRAINAGE.
Nice gardens, tennis court, kitchen garden, etc.
Total area about
ONE-AND-A-QUARTER ACRES.
PRICE, FREEHOLD, £8,500.
Agents, MAPLE & Co.

NORFOLK COAST.
CHOICE AND HEALTHY SITUATION. 200 YDS. FROM SEA SHORE.
THREE MILES FROM HUNDENBY STATION.
NEAR GOLF LINKS.
THIS DELIGHTFUL FREEHOLD MARINE RESIDENCE, with drive approach, and containing:
Hall, three reception rooms, billiard room, eight bedrooms, bathroom.
CAPITAL STABLES AND GARAGE.
Well-furnished garden with tennis lawn, kitchen garden, fruit trees, &c.
ABOUT TWO ACRES.
PRICE, FREEHOLD, £2,500.
Recommended by the Agents, MAPLE & Co., London.

"FOR SALE, 'NORTHVIEW HOUSE,' Hythe.—Most desirable residence, built about 20 years by the owner for his own occupation, with every convenience; never been let. With possession of house, lawn and garden at once; nice position. It has high up and large sports ground, shelter house and stables approached by foot from the Hall; half-a-mile from town of Frome. Town electric light, and water and gas, also phone. A nice quantity of land up to 63 acres would be sold with House & outbuildings, all in a fine view of the Frome.—Price and particulars from C. TUCKER, Batham, Frome.

"KNIGHTLEYS," SERAPHAM HALL ESTATE, HYTHE.—An exceptionally well-built freehold grounds of about a half-acre. All finished lounge hall, light, central heating, south aspect; main drainage; tennis lawn, reservoir, garage, and in splendid order, and within half a mile of station, tram, and town. Vacant possession on completion. For SALE by AUCTION by **WHITTON & LAING,** at the Beacon Hotel, Bath, on Tuesday, March 23rd, at 4 o'clock (unless particulars of the Auctioneers, or Messrs. F. H. H. ORCHARD and SON, Solicitors, both of Bath).

IN THE PICTURESQUE RESIDENTIAL DEVON about two miles from Exmouth, and within four miles of the market town of Newton Abbot, with excellent view on completion of purchase.—The delightful **RESIDENTIAL COUNTRY PROPERTY**, known as **"HILLY CRANES,"** comprises a charming Residence and dressing rooms, excellent offices, etc. Most pleasantly commanding view of exquisite scenery. The most pleasantly commanding view of exquisite scenery. Surrounded by vegetable gardens, range of stabling and outbuildings, equine, orchard, law gardens, etc. of about thirteen-and-a-quarter acres. Together with the exceptionally attractive farmstead adjoining, known as **Sturley Grange Farm**, comprising an acre and a half of land, including cattle, sheep and pig together with capital seasonal calving, and other fixtures, &c. The total acreage of the estate, suitable for about 100 acres.—To be SOLD by PUBLIC AUCTION by **ROBT. FROST & SON,** at the Victoria Hotel, Bath, on Tuesday, March 23rd, 1920, at 4 o'clock, unless particulars of the Auctioneers, or Messrs. F. H. H. ORCHARD and SON, Solicitors, both of Bath.

LAND, ESTATES AND OTHER PROPERTIES WANTED

TO HUNTING GENTLEMEN AND OTHERS, WARWICKSHIRE, BRALES:
Four miles from Shipston-on-Stour, and ten from Danbury. **BOSLEY & HARPER** (late Frank Parsons and STYON), at the White Horse Hotel, Shipston-on-Stour, on Monday, March 22nd, 1920, at 7 o'clock in the afternoon.

Let.—An that highly attractive Freehold COUNTRY RESIDENCE, known as **"SPRINGFIELD HOUSE,"** with picturesque entrance lodge, parking, coach-house or motor garage, pleasure and kitchen gardens, tennis and an area of two-and-a-half acres. Possession may be had on completion.

EDWIN FEAR & WALKER are currently seeking for immediate leasehold purchasers, PROPERTIES of which brief descriptions are given below.—Particulars should be sent to the Estate Office, Winchester and Newbury, 210,000 offered for a gentleman's HOUSE in a well-furnished park up to 100 acres.—35547, 69 Park and Victoria, Winchester and Newbury.

The best source of information about the early years of the school can be found in the Editorials of the School Magazine, written by Miss Bartlett, the deputy head.

The school opened on 27 September 1921 with just 55 pupils who had passed an Entrance examination. It opened at great speed in order to secure a government grant, but it had a severely restricted curriculum presumably because of the small number of staff and its incomplete buildings.

It was housed in 4 rows of former **army huts** until the new school buildings opened in 1939. These were next to **Northcote House** which had been bought as a house for the Headmaster. The advert in the Feb 1921 edition of Country Life offered it for sale. It had been built some 30 years earlier by its owner. The advert states 'A quantity of land up to 63

acres could be sold with the house, if required'. I presume that the land was purchased, and this is the reason why the College has had the space to develop such an extensive campus. Northcote was also used as the preparatory school and a home for the girl boarders, overseen by Mrs Foster, wife of the Headteacher. Their orchard with its walled garden later became the home for O Block.



One unique school member in the 1920's was Kit, the school pony.

In 1925 Mr Foster reminded the pupils of the early days 'you were admitted, and we started with no books or desks and amid the infernal din of hammering on the corrugated iron rooves of the unfinished buildings'. In 1922 numbers rose to 91.



Miss Bartlett's reminiscences give the sense of a pioneering spirit as each new 'first' was achieved. *Our short history has been a series of adventures. We are constantly undertaking something for the first time*'. By 1923 the School Inspectors allowed the

fifth form to take the equivalent of 'O' levels. All staff took part in the 'extra's as well as teaching. To extend the curriculum, teachers were shared with other places – a gym mistress with Sunny Hill, a domestic science teacher with Milk Street, an art teacher with

the Frome School of Art. The organist from St John's took singing lessons. As numbers increased so new subjects came on board e.g., French then Latin (needed for university entrance). Teachers rather than pupils moved at the end of lessons and the hand bell was rung by the caretaker.

A prospectus from 1931 gave the school aims as 'to develop character, self-reliance, alertness and industry and to encourage love of learning and develop a scholarly mind that desires knowledge and the ability to use it.'

Transport to the school was mainly by walking or cycling though Miss Bartlett writes of a boy who came to Saturday cricket by horse and left it grazing on the school field and a girl who came each day from Maiden Bradley in a baker's van.

As the advert for new pupils in 1945 shows, pupils had to pay fees even though they had to pass an examination to be admitted.

A. TO 12 MID

THE COUNTY SCHOOL, FROME

Head Master—
T. T. FOSTER, Esq., M.C., M.Sc.
Senior Mistress—
MISS E. M. BARTLETT, M.A.

**NEXT TERM will begin on TUESDAY
JANUARY 9th, 1945.**

*For full particulars apply to the Head
Master.*
The Head Master will interview Parents
at the School by appointment.
FEES are payable in advance.
Cheques should be made payable to the
Somerset County Council.
The Clerk will attend at the School on
THURSDAY, JAN. 11th, 1945, to receive
any fees not already paid.
Candidates for admission should be under
the age of 12.

F. C. F. WALWIN,
Clerk to the Governors.
Court House, Frome.
Telephone: 2015 (914)

**THE PREPARATORY SCHOOL
FROME**
(For Boys and Girls under the age of ten)

Mistress-in-Charge:—
Miss E. M. TITCOMBE (N.F.U. Higher
Certificate)

**NEXT TERM will begin on TUESDAY
JANUARY 9th, 1945**

For full particulars apply to
T. T. FOSTER,
Northcote, Frome (Tel. 2557)
915

Fees

Tuition Fees inc Stationery and games	£ 4. 0. 0
Use of textbooks	£ 0 7 6
Termly Boarders	£15 0 0
Weekly boarders	£13 13 0
Laundry	£1 5 0

Fees were reduced for Somerset students and there were a number of free places.



Trevor Foster - Headteacher 1921-1946

4. Frome County Secondary School and Frome Grammar School in the Second World War

4.1 Overview

At the start of the war there was an increase of 50 in school numbers because of privately organised evacuations, mainly from London and Birmingham. These were supplemented by the Coopers' and Colfe's school evacuations (described by Barry Edwards in 4.2).

The School contributed one teacher and 60 Old pupils to the armed forces. On site, the caretaker and 2 senior boys took turns at fire watch. Mr. Foster headed up Frome's 'dad's army' (Home watch). There were air raid sirens, and the pupils had specific places to shelter, hiding under desks. Classroom windows were left open to minimise breakages from a bomb blast. The pupils returned after the siren stopped to cold classrooms! Coopers' School dug a trench to act as their air raid shelter.

Mr Foster and Mr Humphries were in the Home Guard whilst Mr Gregory and Mr Moran were ARPs. Miss Bartlett led the girls in knitting large quantities of comforts for the troops. Boys helped Mr Gregory grow vegetables which kept the school meals supplied with fresh veg all winter. Other pupils formed a Youth Service Squad and grew vegetables at the Hospital. The school contributed 450 eggs to the Hospital Egg week. Another collection, which would be frowned on today, provided 2,150 cigarettes for the forces.

A fascinating snippet refers to the School sending 4 representatives to the conference of The Council in World Citizenship' – the theme being 'The World we want to make '.

4.2 COOPERS' AND COLFE'S SCHOOLS IN FROME by Barry Edwards, Frome Museum

On 22nd May 1939, the official opening of the new Frome Grammar School buildings took place, and it was generally assumed that the old army huts which had been used for teaching since 1921 would be demolished. In fact, Mr Foster announced that there would be a reprieve for these huts. It may well be that he foresaw the situation in September 1939 when schools, on the outbreak of war, would have to be evacuated from London.

That is exactly what happened to the very well-established Coopers' Company School in Bow. This successful boys' grammar school had very little option but to vacate their premises, and 230 boys plus 12 staff set off by train for the West Country; although the numbers in Frome subsequently dwindled, the last Coopers' boys did not leave the town until July 1945, at which point the headmaster, A T White, described those 6 years as "the largest adventure in the long history of the school."

Included amongst the first arrivals from London were 2 people who went on to achieve considerable national fame in very different fields. Michael Stewart, a young teacher, later became a politician and was Foreign Secretary in the 1960s. One of the youngest pupils was R D Wingfield, author of the Frost series of detective novels. While in Frome, he wrote his first ever detective work, a one-act play that was performed in the Grand Theatre and was reviewed as follows in the Somerset Standard: "'Murder in the Study' was perhaps the high spot of the evening, a truly riotous farce, a burlesque on Sherlock Holmes. Cpl. Wingfield ATC was the author of this laughable little melodrama, and he is to be warmly congratulated."

The Coopers' contingent left London on 1st September 1939 but disembarked at Savernake in Wiltshire where most were put up in local farms until the move to Frome could be finalised on the 22nd of that month. The facilities in the old huts were understandably sparse, and a number of desks, chairs, books and papers were sent down in advance. The buildings were virtually unheated except for a few "pot-bellied stoves" and the roofs leaked. During the bitterly cold winter of 1939-40, boys, many of them in short trousers, had to cycle out to the school from their billets, and spend their days in these primitive conditions. But, strangely perhaps, the Head made a regular point of telling governors and parents that the boys were fitter and healthier than they had ever been. It was certainly his intention to discourage parents from taking their sons back to London during the 'phoney war' and indeed he called for more evacuees despite the cramped conditions.

White also wanted his pupils and staff to be integrated as far as was possible into Frome life. Not all the locals by any means were enthusiastic about seeing East London adolescents in this quiet market town, and even some of those who put boys up in their houses made life very difficult for their lodgers. One boy, who stayed with a Mrs and Miss H___ at 7 North Hill, declared that he had never been allowed to enter the house through the front door nor step into the living room. Another, who

resided at 31 Berkley Road, was locked out of the house on a Sunday while his hosts went to church.

Interaction with Frome Grammar School was perhaps not as productive as might have been expected. There were a few soccer matches organised, rounders were played on the playing field, but it is believed that there were no shared lessons. However, A T White was always positive and complimentary about the hospitality on offer: "The facilities we had in the gymnasium, chemical laboratories and playing fields of Frome County Grammar School assisted us greatly. There was no occasion when Mr Foster did not meet my suggestions in a spirit of helpfulness. I am glad to say an atmosphere of friendliness developed between the two schools which I think helped them both."

Some of Coopers' teachers were called up to fight and others helped with the local Home Guard. Pupils on their bikes travelled out as far as Wells and Stonehenge at the weekends and a few even cycled back to London for the holidays! They became fascinated with Frome and the war: here is one memory from 1940. "A group of us Coopers' boys were on the bridge over the river in Frome when a platoon of soldiers who had just come back from France came marching along. They looked tired and their uniforms were dirty. As they came to the river bridge, they threw their rifles into the river! They were just so tired and fed up with war...."

Some boys in Nunney Road only narrowly escaped the bombing in that area in 1941 and all threw themselves into Warship Week in February 1942 when Coopers' raised £1040 towards the £175,000 town target in order to adopt the HM Submarine Thunderbolt.

What nobody expected was that, as the Coopers' staff and pupils began tentatively to move back home, another school, Colfe's, that had originally been evacuated to Tunbridge Wells, was instructed to move again, lock, stock and barrel, to Frome in March 1944. This was because Kent was in the direct line of the flying bombs being sent over by the Nazis in a desperate final attempt to regain the initiative. So, 230 boys made their way to the same army huts, only 3 of which were fully available for their use. Billets were also hard to come by and 2 very unsatisfactory hostels had to be set up, one in an old dairy. The pupils spent the last year of the war in Frome, being given treats by American GIs from Orchardleigh, and observing that black and white USA soldiers were allocated different days of the week for free time in the town centre. Later accounts suggest that they were not made very welcome by the locals nor indeed by Mr Foster, but, of course, these reminiscences, sometimes 50 years after the event, would have been very subjective.

As for Coopers', some pupils returned to Frome after the war and a few even married local girls! In a few cases, the whole family of the evacuee came down to live in Frome during or after hostilities and set up businesses here. John Barrow's parents did exactly that, opening shops at 16 Vine Street and 43 Rodden Road. A group of ex-students returned regularly over the years, donating a bench to St John's and contributing to building and restoration appeals. The last of these 'evacuee reunions' was in 2007. Many young Londoners spent their formative years studying and

playing safely in Frome; they remembered with affection into old age the kindness and support they received from the Grammar School and from the good people of the town.

5. Frome Grammar School 1944 – 1970

The Second World War ushered in significant social and political changes, most famously the creation of the NHS. **The Butler Education Act of 1944** raised the school leaving age to 15 and set out a national tripartite system of Grammar Schools, Secondary Technical Schools and Secondary Modern Schools. An 11+ examination was used to select the pupils.

Oakfield became a Secondary Modern, to be joined later by Selwood and the **County Secondary school became the Grammar school**. The new buildings in what is now G Block are based on a model which can be seen across Somerset including Oakfield. **See Front Cover**

One immediate effect was the closure of the preparatory school which Mrs Foster had operated in Northcote House.

In 1946 Mr Foster retired and was replaced by Gilbert Fairs who recalls his first six months most memorably.

We arrived from Norfolk on a gloriously sunny December day, full of hope, ideals and anticipation for our life in a new sphere but the scene was quickly overcast domestically and professionally. domestically, for Northcote which was to be our new home was to have been completely redecorated - not a thing had been done and for 9 months we camped. first in one room then another pursued by workmen.... I found the Maths mistress had died during the holiday, the art Master had transferred to Yeovil and a new PE teacher appointed. All this was news to me with 6 days to go before term opened. Two things then happened - the authority decided that Northcote could be made into maisonettes and had prepared for this, plans which were only withdrawn when, within weeks of arrival, I offered my resignation. Then on 27 January it snowed and snowed heavily and went on snowing for 9 weeks till mid-April. Half the caretaking staff, the half responsible for stoking the boilers and keeping the school as warm as far as the hopelessly inadequate system would allow, fell off his bike on frozen snow and broke his shoulder. School was closed 4 times, and we set up correspondence courses. The snow seeped under the tiles in Northcote and was caught in 20 buckets judiciously placed!

Interestingly, Mr Fairs did not stay long in Northcote. The Governors debated a paper which was prompted initially by an HMI report highlighting accommodation shortages at the School. It stated, 'The Headmaster, due to the size of the house and grounds and the impossibility of maintaining them now he is expected to pay increased rent and a

considerable contribution to the rates, has felt compelled to seek other accommodation This he has now done, and Northcote will become vacant on October 1.' After battles with the Local Authority, it was taken over by the school with its main use as a sixth form centre.

In 1947 there were just 260 students with 8 in the Sixth Form and 11 staff. Parts of Wiltshire including Warminster were in the school's catchment area. Numbers slowly increased so by 1959 there were 435 on roll but economic conditions were such that promising students often left to take a job. Farmers often withdrew their boys if they were short of labour. **See appendix 2**

Mr. Fairs battled hard for new accommodation and over a 10-year period the Biology Block, the Sixth Form Science wing, The Cruttwell and Orchard Blocks were added. Although the Local Authority financed the core buildings, the local Keyford Trust supplemented this for example funding the outdoor swimming pool. (now the top tennis courts). His memoir of his time at the school talks of the economic blizzard of the 50's which meant some pupils left school before taking their examinations in order to earn money for the family.



Gilbert Fairs articulated the distinctive ethos of the school. He quoted Dr William Temple *'Real education comes not chiefly through instruction but chiefly through membership of a community'*. The HMI Inspection in 1960 reflected this *'One of the distinctive features of this school is its strong and healthy corporate life. It went on to pay tribute to the contribution of parents, pupils, old pupils, Governors and especially its staff. It is certainly a happy school'*.



Of the most successful clubs was the School's Nursing Cadet division of St John's Ambulance

In 1966 Gilbert Fairs retired and was followed by John Fisher who had been Head of Physics at Nottingham High School.



The photographic record of the school during its Grammar School years includes many sporting moments





6. 1970 - Comprehensive School – Three Tier system and link to FE - An overview

- In 1970 Somerset LEA changed to a system of Comprehensive Schools. In most of the county the model was of Primary Schools (up to 11), Secondary (11-16) and a post 16 College. In 4 areas the LEA chose a 3-tier system (Minehead, Crewkerne, Cheddar and Frome). A few other counties used this model which is common in private education. In Somerset's 4 areas it offered a sensible way to create sixth forms of a viable size. Oakfield and Selwood, which had been secondary schools, became the Middle Schools and the primary schools became First schools. John Fisher, the Head of the Grammar School, became Head of the Comprehensive Upper School.
- At the same time local government reorganisation created 'Avon' out of Bristol and parts of Gloucestershire and 'historic' Somerset. This made for problems in Northeast Somerset where the FE College was on a split site – Radstock and Frome. Avon retained Norton-Radstock FE College. The Frome site was too small to survive on its own and an ingenious idea was hatched to combine it with the new Comprehensive School creating **Frome College**. There was one Principal but two governing bodies and two budgets. This was a unique institution in the country.
- The FE College was still based in Park Road, but a **one campus policy** was established with the view that it would gradually move onto the Bath Road site. Business Studies was an early department to move across. The new Engineering Block was being constructed just as the LEA took the decision to close the FE College.
- There were 3 broad strands to the offer from the Frome FE College – vocational courses, adult education courses and a broader community-based approach to shared resources. As examples of the latter, Park Road was the

home of a unique collection of spinning wheels and looms from the mills which used to dominate the centre of Frome. The classes which used these later became a self-supporting group ably chaired by Jane Lewis. The **Weaving** base moved to the Bath Road campus in 1992. The College also provided a base for **Frome Costume Wardrobe**. Even in the 1980's Frome was a creative town, adept at generating its own imaginative solutions. Those managing costumes for the various Drama groups in the town came together with a vast store of costumes to be saved and shared in future productions.

- Closure was proposed in 1990 caused by two financial matters. Somerset was looking to cut £6 million from its Education budget and by 1990 education funding had moved to a 'payment per student' as opposed to block grants. Frome had fewer students and, arguably, was being subsidised by the other Colleges in the county. A number of options were floated including merger with Strode College at Street. Granted the distance between Frome and Street, it would mean most students wanting FE courses would go to Trowbridge College. Local papers record a long-standing fight to maintain the FE College, but the LA took the decision to close Frome FE College with effect from 31 August 1992. The newspapers at the time estimated it would lead to 90 redundancies. **See Appendix 3.**

7. Creating a Community Campus

- The period around 1970 was a dynamic one for the College as it became a joint 13-19 School and an FE College. It became the largest school in Somerset, some year groups having 450 students. These required new buildings, and the vision of John Fisher meant that there was significant investment into **joint use facilities**. At the same time new local authorities were created in Somerset and these were ambitious to develop their services for local residents. As the school magazine celebrating the School's Jubilee in 1971 recorded, there was a community push to mark the 50th birthday with a new theatre.
- **New Teaching Blocks were opened in 1972.** M block was named after Mayenne (Chateau Gontier twinned with Frome is in this Department) and K block (Keyford). There remained a mass of mobile classrooms across the campus.
- **Merlin Theatre –1974**
The Merlin Theatre was conceived as a project to mark the 50th anniversary of the School. Local fund-raising took place with such schemes as 'buy a brick'. From the start it was planned to be the School's drama space in the daytime and a high-quality space for professional and community performances in the evenings and at weekends. It opened in 1974 and in the early days the Director was also Head of Drama at the College.

Such a pioneering scheme helped to create the College's reputation for excellence in the Arts.

The Merlin is a registered Charity run by its own Board of Trustees. A small professional staff is supported by a band of volunteers. For more details visit the Merlin website.

<http://www.merlintheatre.co.uk>

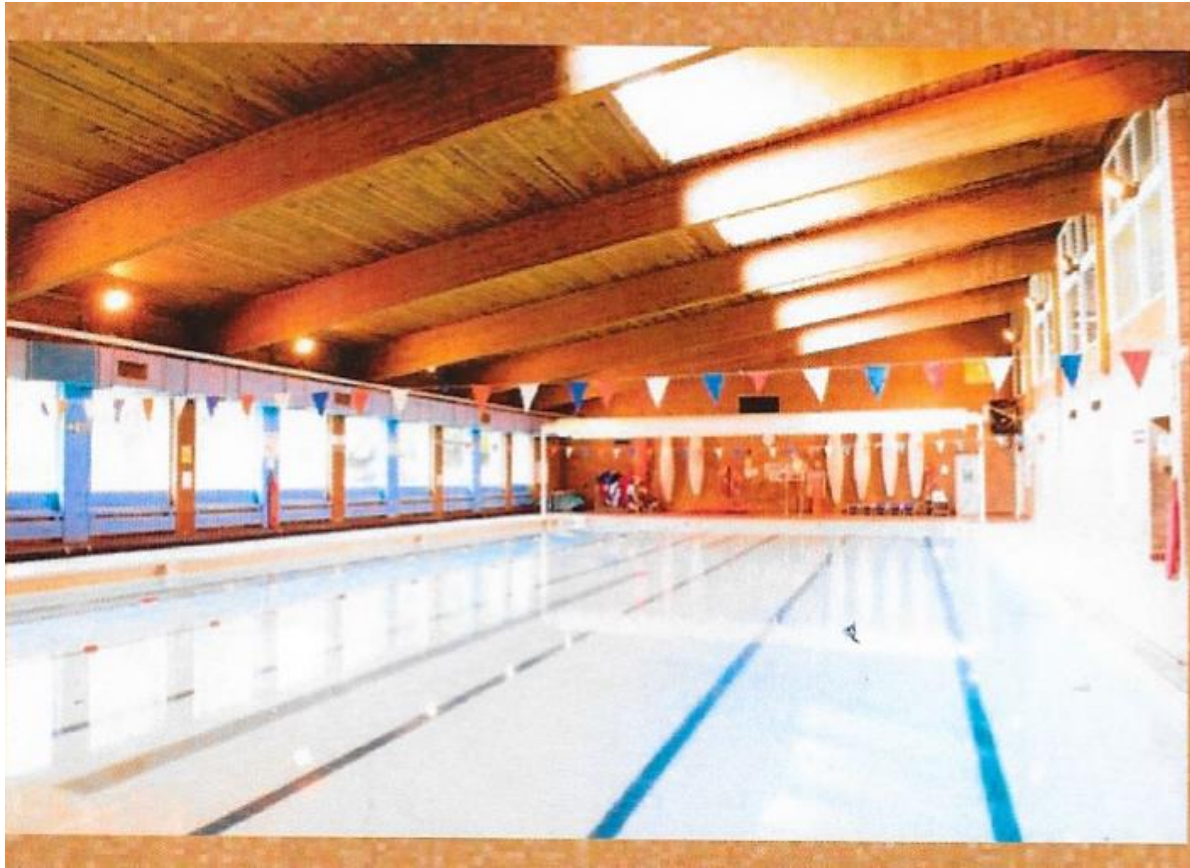
- **Leisure Centre –1974 Joint use with Mendip District Council.**

The new District Authority - Mendip - collaborated with the College in creating Frome Leisure Centre.

The concept of dual use made a great deal of sense in that it meant that the College could have better sports facilities than many schools and the community could benefit in the evenings and at weekends. A red grass pitch was built for dual use with Frome Hockey Club initially. In the 1990's the trend was for artificial grass and a community-based Lottery bid **Target '96** raised the matched funding.

The facility benefitted the young of the town as a whole as generations of First School students learned to swim at the pool.

Budgets were tight and one costly bill for the removal of the earth to create the swimming pool was eased by a John Fisher ruse. It was piled on the campus and became a **dry ski slope** for a number of years. As vegetation took hold the ski slope became a hiding place for students but in recent years its value in promoting wildlife e.g. butterflies has been recognised.



Those of us who are keen advocates of community facilities still support the shared use of resources. Why cannot school facilities be opened up at weekends and holidays? But in recent years new challenges arose. The model assumed the community only wants to use the facilities after school hours. Retirement and flexible working means that the community want daytime access. Also, the pressure on public finances creates difficulties of joint investment in facilities.

- **Specialist educational facilities for NE Somerset**

Frome was seen by the local authority to be a good base for specialist provision for the northeast of the county.

Focus Unit – for post 16 students with Learning Difficulties. This provided a supportive environment for young people who moved up from Critchell School. Despite a long fight to keep it open, the local authority decided that students should transfer to Wiltshire College in Trowbridge.

Appendix 8 records the fight to keep the unit open.

Hearing Impaired Unit and Speech and language provision In the 1980's Somerset provided specialist staff based in 4 school clusters across the County. Mendip children whose hearing was impaired or needed extra support with speech and language were transported to a school where they could be integrated into normal lessons but with the support of specialist teachers and support staff. Oakfield and FCC led on Hearing whilst Selwood

and the College led on Language. Students thrived because they could attend classes with their peers but with additional specialist support. Over the years, however, parents wanted their child to attend their local school and pushed for the provision to be spread across all schools in Somerset and, as a result, the Hearing Unit was disbanded.

- **Youth Wing**

In an era where local authorities provided a comprehensive youth service, Frome had a Youth Club on Vallis Road. This served the south side of town, and the idea developed of creating another centre to serve the North. A youth wing was built next to the Leisure Centre. Although the concept was good and indeed there were excellent links built between the College staff and the youth workers, the client group as a whole did not necessarily want to return to the College campus in the evening.

A paper to the Governors from John Fisher dated 1974 speaks volumes of his pioneering spirit. Let's secure the building and worry about how to run it and pay for it later. It warns, 'the staffing and administration in the wing are going to pose a problem'. This closed when Somerset ended its support for Youth services.

The youth wing later became a Sixth Form Common room and later the base for Media Arts in the days of the Specialist College.

Ironically the College became a central partner in Frome's own Youth service. Young People Frome.

- **Other corners of the campus**

G Block memorial garden – tribute to ex-students killed in a major car crash.

Edith Butcher Garden- Edith Butcher was a longstanding and much-loved Deputy Head in the 80's. She died in post and collections were held at the time of her funeral. A charitable Trust in her name was created and provided funds for young people to undertake projects which involved travel and young people with disabilities. A Garden was created outside the Library as a quiet area for reflection.

Time capsule – A time capsule with items nominated by the students was buried to mark the Millennium.

War Memorials

The College has plaques which commemorate those pupils and staff who lost their lives in the two World Wars along with a student who was killed in the Falklands conflict. These are presently located in the main college reception.

8. Community College – serving the whole community

a. Closure of FE - a unified community college on one site

In 1990, with the pending retirement of John Fisher, Somerset took the decision to close the FE College. By then moves were underway to incorporate FE Colleges away from local authority control. The closure was robustly fought and thereafter, the point was frequently made to the LA that Frome was the 4th largest town in Somerset but had no FE provision in town.

See Appendix 3 for a newspaper article about the bitter fight to keep FE in the town

Barry Bates was appointed Principal in 1991, knowing that within a year he would be managing the closure of FE. An LA Officer warned him 'you will be managing contraction'. There were significant challenges. The FE budget had subsidized the school one for example in paying all the school support staff budget.

The sweetener from the LA was that the money from the sale of Park Road could be invested in community facilities on the school's site. A notional amount was agreed, and it was way above what the LA eventually got for the sale of the Park Road site. The original idea was for a separate community block. The Head of Community, Malcolm Lloyd, and Barry Bates both wanted an integrated site and argued for a different approach which would integrate the community and school. Thus, the adult art facilities were built into the quad with the existing art department. This had that powerful image for the day students of seeing 80-year-olds next door doing a pottery course and recognising the value of lifelong learning. It meant facilities such as those for photography could be shared and enhanced. A **community education centre** was built, and this facility offered a whole series of adult courses, including access into HE.

- The 1970's and 80's had seen a number of visionary local authorities create community schools. Cambridge had its Village Schools, whilst Devon and Bedfordshire created community schools. Somerset had a visionary Chief Education Officer, Barrie Taylor. Schools which demonstrated a commitment to community education were given additional funding and staffing which opened up the school's resources to the whole community.
- **Littleoaks Nursery** - opened in 1989 – now called Little Discoveries. The funding for the nursery initially came from a national scheme to help teachers return to the classroom with good quality childcare. The Nursery opened to a wider range of parents and provided the youngest members of

the campus as well as work experience placements for College students studying Child Care.

- **Community Education Centre –**

The purpose-built Community Education building next to the main car park included an IT suite which offered many courses to the community.

The provision of community education at its height was graded by OFSTED as outstanding and it is hard in this short history to give a sense of the scope it 'covered'. **Appendix 1** written by **Malcolm Lloyd, the Coordinator of Community Education 1988-2003** is a summary of the activities, organisations, and individuals involved. This type of investment is about 'creating cultural capital' and I would suggest that community education not only changed the lives of individuals but also built capacity and cooperation in the town, the sort of things that have made the town it is today.

- b. Examples of the success of community education**

- **LR** – This person had children who were students at the College – She joined as a lunchtime assistant. She became a Teaching Assistant and then began evening classes to gain qualifications. This led on to an 'Access to HE' course in Community Education. Following this, she trained as a teacher of Maths. A superb example of lifelong learning opportunities which existed at that time.
- **The Heart of Frome map** The College via Community education attracted funding for many community projects. The Heart of Frome Map - on display in the Town Library was produced in 1996 led by the artist Kate Lynch. Teachers Tamsin Thomas and Roland Hurrell led a student team who produced a section featuring G Block and ECOS.

See Appendix 4

- **Frome Collegians** - College took a lead in creating Frome Collegians in 1976 – a football club which grew to have many teams, initially using the College grounds for matches. Frome Collegians continues to this day.
- **ECOS – the amphitheatre and the festivals**

See appendix 6 for a news article

Notes taken from the plaque unveiled in 2013.

The European Community of Stones Amphitheatre

ECOS is a Community Sculpture from an original artistic concept by Barry Cooper, which he developed with John Fisher (then Principal of Frome College) in 1989. His successor Barry Bates gave valuable ongoing support.

The idea of placing an amphitheatre at the heart of the community of stones was proposed by Mike Walker (Chairman of ECOS); the sculpture was designed by Barry Cooper and Laurence Knee.

It is a Forum for future Prosperity, Peace and Goodwill between the peoples of Europe, fostering cultural exchanges between young people; inviting International Festivals, and encouraging other communities in Europe to build their own ECOS amphitheatres.

The generous involvement of local industry enabled this ambitious project to be realised with the help of the people of Frome. The monoliths were freely donated by the twelve founding countries of the European Union in 1992.

Peter Chapman (Project Manager) selected the stones in their country of origin: arranged the shipping and chose their final positions with the designers. Angela Yeoman, of Foster Yeoman Limited, gave generous sponsorship to the project. The surveying, landscaping and the engineering of the site were overseen by Grant Gellatly of Balfour Beatty. The local stone dressings of the auditorium and terraces were hand picked from local quarries by community volunteers. They were laid with great dedication by Frank Turner with the assistance of Frome young people. Paul Williams supervised College students with the landscaping of the terraces.

ECOS was opened by Margaret Daly, M.E.P in 1992 when Mike Walker with Martin Dimery, Philip de Glanville, Annabelle MacFadyen and Bob Hinton produced the first International ECOS Festival for young people involving over 1000 participants.

The project was honoured by the Royal Anniversary Trust that year when Mike Walker, Peter Chapman and members of the College team were presented with an award by H.M.The Queen at St. James' Palace.

In 2004 Barry Cooper designed a further stage area and carved the Portland stone Tree of Life on a curving bank planted with 11 Holm Oak Trees; College students created 12 colourful dancing figures, to complement the European stones. The Tree of Life was based on a cameo carving on the Greek stone by Aristides Varrias. In the same year ECOS inspired the building of an amphitheatre on Paros, Greece.

9. The Community College from 1991 onwards

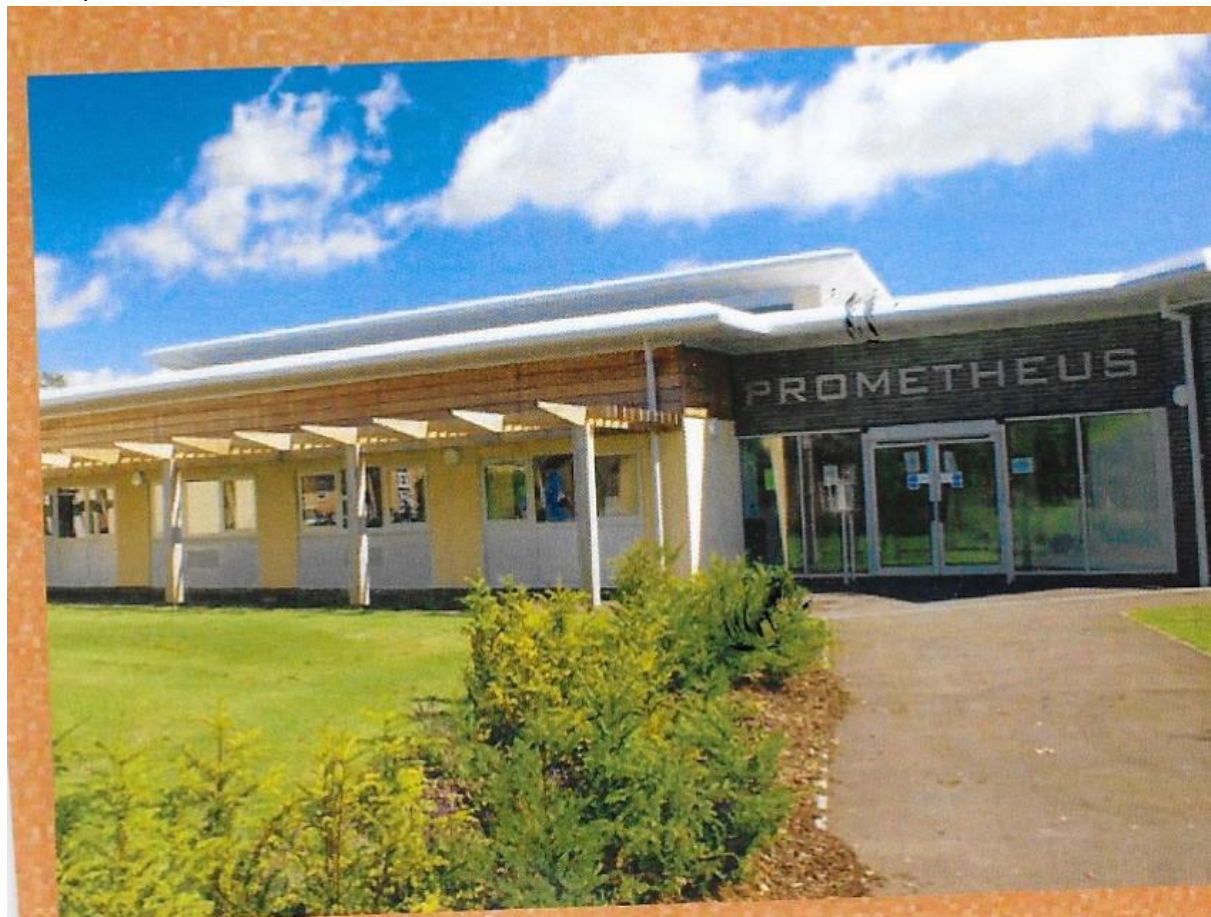
9.1 Drive for new school buildings

The rapid expansion of the College had been facilitated by the arrival of a mini city of mobile classrooms and there was an ongoing plan to upgrade the College facilities via whatever source was available at the time.

The sale of Park Road financed the creation of a **Design Technology Block** in what had been the FE Engineering Block. Food and Textiles were moved to become part of this in 1992 just as the Government was making Technology a compulsory subject to the age of 16. The former Food rooms became the **ICT Centre**.

In 2000 the College gained £540,000 from the New Deal for Schools money from new Labour. This saw a new **Science Laboratory and a refurbishment of the Science Labs**.

The **Prometheus** building which houses the Maths team and a Drama studio was opened in 2006.



The Post 16 Centre, **Frome Futures**, was opened in 2009.

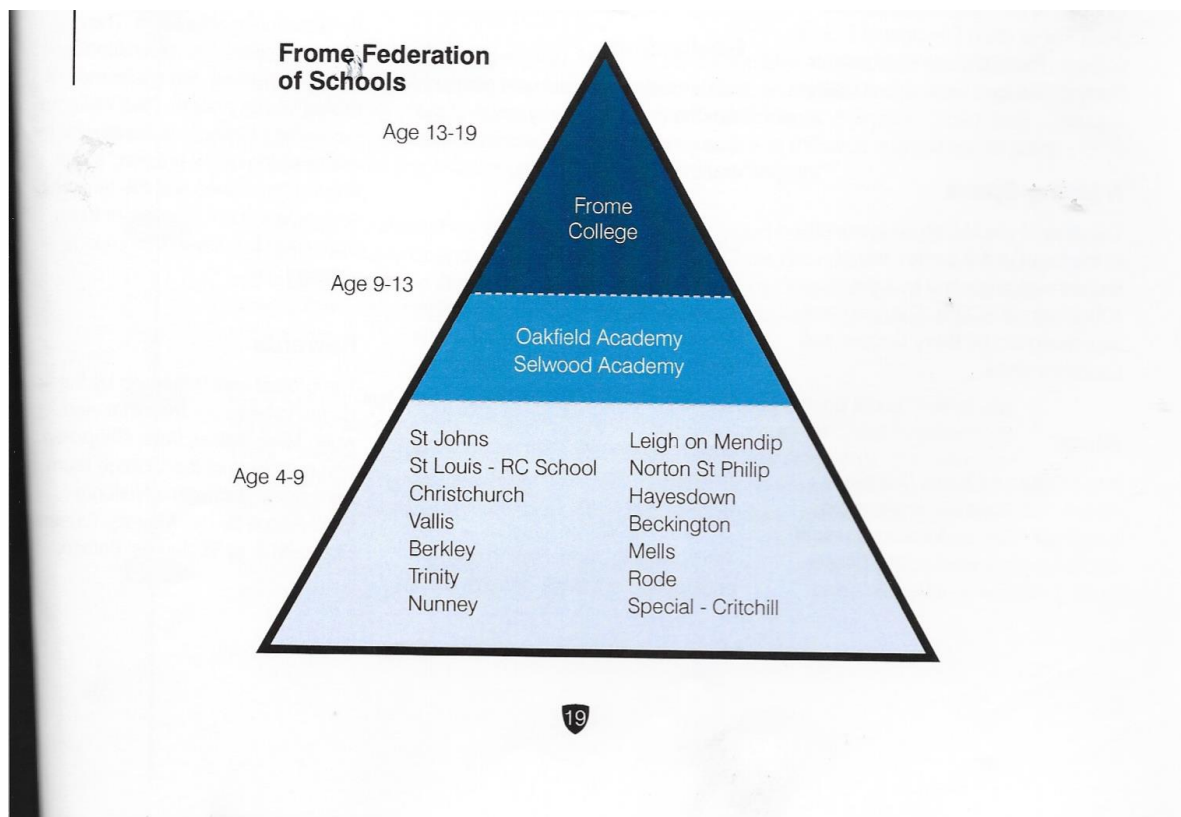
9.2 A wide curriculum on offer. The size of year groups meant that the College had a large sixth form. As a result, the College was able to offer a wide range of courses at GCSE and A Level and recruit specialist staff. It was, for example, unusual for schools to offer Law as an A Level. Community facilities enriched learning such as the Merlin Theatre as a Drama space. Frome College was one of the few schools to offer agricultural science as a year 10/11 option.

9.3 The National Curriculum 1998 onwards

In 1988 the Government introduced a national curriculum based on 4 Key Stages. This presented a particular problem for the Frome 3 tier system in that Key Stage 2 straddled the First and Middle Schools whilst Key Stage 3 was taught for two years in the Middle School and the final year at the College. There had always been collaboration between the schools e.g., on the choice of Modern Foreign Languages, but the national curriculum gave added impetus to this work and the Frome Federation of Schools developed.

9.4 Frome Federation of Schools

Somerset LA had established the pyramid of schools in the Frome area
The pyramid



All schools and their pupils benefitted from the cooperation which developed. Shared resources such as an IT Technician helped the smaller schools.

9.5 SCRA – a great staffroom association

As the largest secondary school in Somerset on an extensive campus, it was recognised by all that we should invest in developing a caring community of staff. In the 1990's the mantra of 'one staff' was used to signify that the support staff were as one with the teaching staff. SCRA - the Staff Common Room Association was the driving force. The SCRA awards at the end of Christmas and summer terms provided much hilarity as did the lengthy leaving speeches. For staff with longer service there was a Russell Coates plate. The Summer term often ended with the staff B-B-Q.

9.6 The loss of LA funding for Community Education and the tensions of dual use

By the mid 1990's Somerset had designated all its secondary schools as community schools and distributed the pot of money across all schools. The concept of community schools worked less well in the towns with say 4 secondary schools and best in towns where one school could act as a local hub. Pressures on local authority funding and the drive from 'conservative' politicians to reduce Local authority activity down to the statutory services led to the reduction in community funding. Frome had always been adept at securing additional funding but inevitably the provision declined.

Dual use had its own challenges. When the Leisure Centre opened there was less daytime demand from the community to use facilities such as the swimming pool whilst national concerns about the safeguarding of young people made it more difficult for schools to open their campuses to the community at large.

10. Frome Community College A Specialist Media Arts College 2002 - 2010 - Transforming learning

The Education Reform Act 1988 introduced a new compulsory subject of Technology, but there were insufficient funds to equip all schools to teach the subject. A first attempt at developing centres of excellence, the City Technology College programme between 1988 and 1993, had produced only 15 schools. In 1994, the Conservative government, at the urging of Sir Cyril Taylor, designated 35 grant-maintained and voluntary aided schools as Technology Colleges. The schools were required to arrange private sponsorship of £100,000 and would then receive a matching government capital grant and increased

recurrent funding. The following year the programme was opened to all maintained schools, and specialism in Languages was added. Specialisms in Arts and Sport were added in 1996.

As specialism implied diversity of schools, it was opposed by many supporters of comprehensive schools, including many in the Labour Party. Nevertheless, in 1997 the new Labour government, also encouraged by Sir Cyril Taylor, adopted the embryonic programme, and the number of specialist schools continued to grow. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 made it possible for specialist schools to select up to 10% of their intake on aptitude in the existing specialisms in sport, the arts, modern languages and technology.

Frome College had initially chosen not to get involved with the programme. A system of specialist schools might have made sense in a large city, but the concept made no sense in a rural county. Once, however, Labour chose to extend the programme, the College could not miss out on the additional funding on offer. The Governors looked at all specialisms on offer and chose **Media Arts** on the grounds that it was the least 'specialist' of the specialisms and could be utilised by all subjects in the College.

Schools had to raise 'matched funding' and submit plans which were vetted. **See Appendix 5 for a celebration photo.**

The schools in the Frome Federation were brought in as our partner schools. Mike Walker was the first Director of the Media Arts College, and the college quickly gained a national reputation for its innovative use of technology to enhance teaching.

The Media Arts College was formally launched at an event with David Puttnam the celebrated film director as guest speaker.

By 2002 Information Technology was transforming all areas of life. All subject areas were desperate for access. Within a few years we had moved from 2 or 3 rooms which had to be booked for IT in all subject areas and the whole site connected to the internet. Media Arts gave the College the funding to bring this forward.

The College quickly established itself as a national leader and in recognition hosted the national Conference of Media Arts Colleges in 2003. One of the early projects was a month-long Frome FM to coincide with the Frome Festival.

11. Frome Community College History 2008 – 2021

ROLAND HURRELL

The year 2008 marked a significant change of guard at FCC. Barry Bates remained skilfully at the helm for 17 years before retiring from his role in Frome as Head of its extremely vibrant and effective, all-encompassing, Comprehensive Secondary school. Much had changed and much had been achieved during his tenure.

The post was next offered to Frome Community College's first female Head teacher, **Wendy Missons**. Hers was a relatively short tenure in comparison but in that short time the College

moved on apace. Keynote amongst the changes that took place has to be the creation of a state-of-the-art post-16 building. It was named '**Frome Futures**' and within its walls there were classrooms, a huge computer suite, post-16 offices, a spacious work room and a huge social area. It came complete with its own private landscaped and planted garden too which was a real bonus and really transformed the experience and opportunities of the Tertiary/Post 16 students. The building was placed behind the Humanities block (originally known as Keyford) and at the back of the Ski Slope in its own discrete place. This all-new facility was opened on the 19th July 2012 by The Right Hon. Vince Cable M.P. the then Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills. A highly respected and well-known politician, he was to become Leader of the Liberal Democratic



Party in 2017.

Wendy Missons was extremely adept at finding and securing funds for the College. To this end, with almost immediate effect, two brand new minibuses were bought for the College. The very old and now extremely tired ones, 'Bertie' and 'Bessie' were retired with honours. The College, with such an active and involved outreach programme, far reaching and high achieving Sporting programmes, plus extensive nationwide Duke of Edinburgh activities, always makes very good use of these vital tools of the school.

Also at this time, due to the Conservative Government's undermining and dismantling of the Local Education Authority's remit to run its own schools, FCC began on its long-drawn-out saga of seeking to become its own self-run Academy. The governing body of the College had

a very difficult and controversial decision to make and was equally split on the issue. It took the presiding vote of Wendy Missons to make the application to become a self-governing Academy a reality. Ultimately through three Head Teachers and two Heads of Governors, and through many changes in the Government's approach, Frome Community College remains an L.E.A. led school in Somerset. Another change to the College at this time has been the dropping of the Media Arts badge which it held proudly for a good many years. The College also slowly morphed from being known as, and being proud to be, Frome Community College, to being known more simply as 'Frome College'.

The rubber stamping of this change came very obviously with the arrival of a new Head Teacher and a new uniform in 2012 which was visible clearly on the pocket of the new purple fluted blazer 'Frome College'. Regardless of the subtle name change, the College remains firmly rooted in the heart of its whole town community, giving to the town and receiving important input from the town in equal measure.

With the departure of Wendy Missons, Frome College staff smiled, took a breath and welcomed our new Principal, Gavin Ball. He, a locally born Somerset man, hit the ground running and boosted the confidence of the staff with his active and engaged pedagogic approach, re-energising and reinvigorating them. The renaissance was not long lived however because within a couple of months of his tenure, Ofsted came to call. The Office of Standards in Education inspectors sadly found fault with the College and what ensued was a year and a half of high stress, hard work and recalibration. Ultimately the College came out of the experience a much more effective and better organised school.

During the five years of Mr Ball's time as Head, he made several key changes. Through the uniform, his team communicated the fact that the Year Head system had changed to a House Head system of pastoral care. Five Houses were created, and each house had a different colour which was shown in the coloured stripes of their particular tie.

The Houses had their own defined areas of the College where their tutor groups from across the years would be based. They also had their own common rooms. The Houses were named after people of science. They were Aristotle, Einstein, Franklin, Hypatia and Newton.

This was all a new concept for The College and whilst it took a while to bed in, it proved its worth over time. The House system has a more intimate approach and has enabled the House Heads to have a more manageable workload especially when it comes to exam time with Year 11s.

Also, part of the new College and its marketing strategy was the initiation of a College Newsletter produced 5 times a year. This glossy, coloured, in-house, professionally produced magazine has helped to raise the profile of the College within its own community, with its parents and carers and further afield within the town. The newsletter was a very neat way of highlighting and celebrating the wealth of opportunities and the multifarious and amazing things that a diverse school such as ours is involved in during the academic year. From the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme to Careers Fairs to Adult Pottery classes to the Rotary sponsored Young Photographer of the Year exhibition up at the Rook Lane Chapel to the 'Later at Frome College' at the Cheese and Grain and The Carol Concert at St John's Church. Each in

its own way features an explosion of nascent student talent and experience. The magazine has also featured the many regular school trips to Iceland, The First World War Battlefields of Belgium and France, to New York, Moscow and St Petersburg, Paris and Berlin. Skiing trips took place to the Alps and Water Sports trips to Italy and France. Multi-faith trips to Birmingham to visit Hindu Temples, Sikh Gurdwaras, Moslem Mosques, Serbian Orthodox and Afro Caribbean Charismatic Churches. Also in the magazine, Law and Politics visits to the Old Bailey and The Houses of Parliament and Big Ben trips have been regularly featured. Of course, sporting achievements are a regular feature and very much at the core of celebrating student success. For instance, our Under 16 Girls football team went on to win the ESFA National Championship not once but twice, most recently in 2017 at Manchester City's Etihad stadium where they won 4 -3 against a top sporting College in Telford sponsored by Nike! What a performance!

Other regular photo features would be the College Open Days, regular Careers Cafes, Food competitions and Awards, Rotary Youth Speaking competitions (where F.C. students always perform brilliantly). Then there are all the Celebration afternoons or evenings, whether they be for the Sports Personality or for G.C.S.E.s...the list is endless but all help to create involvement and aspirational opportunity and create skills for the future.

The magazine is a real testament and affirmation of the skills and interests, vision and vitality of our staff and students and also to the many people within the community of Frome who willingly involve themselves in helping to support the school and its students to do the very best for themselves.

One 'building' that was erected under Mr Ball's tenure in 2016 was the 'Last Tree Dreaming'. Rather than a building, this was as the title suggests a tree, albeit a dead one! The tree in question was a 250-year-old, 57-foot-tall, large oak which was felled on the Stourhead Estate. It had featured in the J.M.W. Turner painting entitled 'View over the Lake at Stourhead'. The tree is covered in panels carved by students from many of Frome's schools as part of a large-scale Frome wide art project. It now stands proudly upright as a sentinel at the Bath Road entrance to The College and is lit up at night.



Happily during Gavin Ball's tenure, the exam results of Frome College students continued to rise year on year to new levels of excellence and outshone many of our neighbouring schools and were amongst the best in Somerset. When Gavin Ball left to take on the Executive Head role at the Wessex Learning Trust of Cheddar Schools (A Multi Academy Trust), he left Frome College spiritually and academically in good shape.

Next up to lead The College in 2017 and into its 100th year as the senior school of Frome was Emma Reynolds, a young, vibrant Head who from day one showed an open, honest and very clear approach. She was someone who immediately impressed you with the breadth of her scope, her quick thinking and decisive action.

So, heading inexorably towards Frome College's Centenary on the 26th of September 2021 what has happened so far on her watch?

The College under Principal Reynolds' tutelage continued to celebrate the wide breadth of life within or without its four walls.... or should we say ring fence? This is because one of the key requirements of the Conservative government for a school to pass its Ofsted inspection was the 'safeguarding of children'. Despite everything else that the school might do very effectively, if its pupils were deemed to be unsafe then that would lead to an automatic failure. As such Frome College, alongside many, many thousands of other schools around the country, was forced to spend serious money on high metal fences encircling their sites with locked gated entry points. So, one of the things that the College has always prided itself upon, its open access site was finally gone forever.

One other significant change was the populating of the once Community Education Block by Frome College administration and Print Centre. It became the new (and easy to find!) Reception area and marked another change of venue for the Frome College staff room.

Many of the well-known and celebrated aspects of The College continued to flourish. The Rotary Club interviews for all in Year 10, The Wells Cathedral Somerset Schools Christmas celebration, the student choreographed Fashion Shows and Dance Spectaculars and the annual plays at the Merlin Theatre. The most recent of these have been Grease and Chicago. Good enough for the West End any day! The Open Days are always a way of celebrating Frome College at its best and the Adult Pottery Classes in the Art Block Quad, set up all those years ago by Barry Bates, are still a very visible and vibrant part of the college.

One thing that has definitely developed apace, with Emma Reynolds' encouragement, is the D of E. (Duke Of Edinburgh Award). As part of her inclusivity agenda, she suggested to Steve Marsh (the long-time coordinator of the scheme for Frome College) that all Year 9 should be offered the opportunity to become involved. A week of College life was set aside and on four separate days, students would camp overnight locally, be taught basic camp craft and map reading. The next morning with a member of staff or a volunteer they would walk a 5-hour circuitous route back to the College. This really helped to open up D of E to those students who might never have got involved before. Numbers enrolling at bronze level have reached whole new levels as a direct consequence.

At the Gold level, Duke of Edinburgh students continue to complete all six expeditions, and all the vital skills and voluntary work that is a key part of it. As such a good number every year continue to receive their awards at Buckingham and St James's Palace.

For any school at the heart of its community – and especially the largest secondary school in Somerset - Frome College has had its fair share of tragedy. The College has a specially dedicated Memorial Garden in the science quad of the old 1945 built Grammar block. It was

designed by a renowned Irish landscape gardener and created in the 1990s to mark the tragic loss of three then current Frome College students who lost their lives on the Frome bypass in a car crash coming back from a local music Festival. Melanie France and brother and sister Isabel and Tom Sassoon.

Today it also marks the very recent death in December 2018 of English and Media teacher Anna Kirsopp Lewis. She and her unborn child were both killed in another car accident this time on the A36 on the edge of Frome. Anna was an extremely well liked, hardworking and respected member of staff. Students and staff were mortified by this double tragedy.

On the 21st March 2019 the Merlin Theatre hosted the BBC's Question Time with Fiona Bruce as its compere and many of our students were involved and learning from the experience. Also, in March that year Frome College announced that 'one of the aims this year is to improve electronic communication with parents and community'. This proved to be remarkably prescient. Whether staff or students liked it or not, they were all skyrocketed into online digital communication by the Coronavirus Pandemic which hit the world in 2020. Historically, nothing since the Big Freeze of 1963 has had as much effect on the everyday life of the school.

With the first National Lockdown at the end of March, students and many staff began working from home – online. This was a massive learning curve for many and a huge extra stress for many students, their families and the College's staff. Ultimately the whole staff of Frome College, whatever their remit, pulled out all the stops. So many changes had to be trialled and enacted to provide adequate support and safety for students at home and those attending the College site. Many of the changes were as a result of quick thinking by college staff rather than instruction from government. Masks, making space, teaching in secure bubbles, different arrival and departure times, designated toilets, super cleaning schedules, hand sanitiser, extra ventilation, one-way routes around campus, marquees to provide extra space had to be thought through and enacted. This was initially for the vulnerable and Key worker students and then later when all students were allowed to attend school. Another massive headache was the abandoning of all exams in the summers of 2020 and 2021 and all the extra work that that entailed. Also, Frome College began conducting Online Parents' Evenings, perhaps a marker of how things will be done in the future. Time will tell.

Emma Reynolds paid tribute to all students, all staff – whatever their role- and to all families during this extraordinary time. She said that 'countless families have supported each other during this difficult and exacting time'. Also, she wanted it to be noted the positive effect that local charities had had on supporting Frome's vulnerable families. It is good to relate that, despite this all-encompassing pandemic, the College's post-16 Centre 'Frome Futures' has reported record numbers applying. Added to this the BTEC, G.C.S.E. and A Level results continue to improve.

Students and staff did work very hard to keep everyone's spirits up during this difficult time. The College technical wizards helped to put on its celebrated 'Later with Frome College' and the Christmas Carol Concert – virtually, both of which showcase the rich and varied musical talent which has always been at the very forefront of Frome College life. These online musical extravaganzas were greatly appreciated by all when the ability to see live entertainment was

halted. Likewise, on the music theme, there was also Frome College's online sensation, The Wellerman Sea Shanty....

So, the Pandemic has rather drawn a veil over the year 2020 and of course the College's centenary year too. However, bowed but not beaten, The College and its partners have decided to celebrate this 100th anniversary with a number of events in 2021 and into 2022. There will be a big Frome College Party. The Frome Museum is putting on a special exhibition marking The College's passage of time in all its forms, and there was a special Centenary Concert at St John's Church on Sunday the 26th September. For the 26th of September is the fateful day when 'Frome College' was founded, and it began its work for the community of Frome.

The College is today the one and only senior school for all students who live in Frome, welcoming everyone through its doors. To great applause! Long may that continue.

Here's to Frome College, Here's to the 100th, Here's to all who have walked its floors. Here's to a bright future continuing well into its second century. Hip Hip Hooray!

12. Frome College people

Over the years thousands of people have passed through the College. The selection here shows the richness of the contributions of individuals and the sense of community.

12.1 County Secondary School

- **Mr Trevor Foster**- Headteacher from 1921 to 1946. The Somerset Standard reported extensively on the tributes on his retirement. He was a chemistry teacher but lent his hand to other subjects including carpentry. He was fully engaged in the life of the school e.g. using the starting pistol on Sports Day, coaching sports teams and building stage sets. His wife had been very much part of the school. She organised the prep School in Northcote House as well as the school dinners which were taken in Northcote. Not only that but she supplied costumes for school plays and arranged fundraising for stage lighting! The paper reports about picnics and Christmas parties which she arranged. They retired to Buckfastleigh in Devon. He was well-known for the keen interest he took in the pupils. Over 300 added to the tribute at his retirement.
- **Miss Bartlett** – Deputy and Editor of the Magazine retired in 1959 after 35 years at the school. She was Head of English and also found time to produce many of the drama productions establishing a tradition which still exists. In World War 2 she became a nursing officer in St John's Ambulance within the town.

12.2 Grammar School

- **Gilbert H Fairs** became Head in 1946 moving from Norfolk where he was Headmaster of Diss Secondary School. He was a keen sportsman and involved with scouting. He had begun as a games and history teacher and published several textbooks.
- **June Barnes – stalwart of the ex-students’ association**

June is the link with the 100 years of the College. She passed her scholarship whilst Foster was still Head. She remembers Fairs’ first day - on stage with steely blue eyes. He founded the ex-students’ association and when he retired asked June to take it on. This she did with Ray Whitmarsh as the Secretary. June learned the value of service at the College and has continued this throughout her life. She was awarded the MBE for her work. This includes 70 years running Frome Netball Club, a love nurtured at the College. June is a key member of Frome Carnival Committee and for many years served on the committee at the Frome Youth Centre.

The Old Pupils’ Association was active from the days of the County Secondary School and became FESA - Frome ex-students’ Association. It remains vibrant with an annual reunion.

- **John Fisher** - John was appointed as Head of the Grammar School in 1966. when the College became a comprehensive school which merged with the FE College to become Frome College, John was appointed Principal. It was his drive and entrepreneurial skills which saw the campus develop with the Theatre, Leisure Centre.
- **Denis Barnard writes about his time at the Grammar School 1944-1949**

I took my 11 plus early and arrived at Frome Grammar School, aged 10, a grey suit, socks, black shoes, all bought with clothing coupons. No school uniform - there was a war on. No school bus - cycled in all weathers, 3 1/2 miles each way. A race to a radiator to dry off.

T T Foster was the Head. He wore a mortar board and at 6ft 2ins was quite a formidable person. Then came G H Fairs, immaculate, quite short, nice smile, a traditional Christian gentleman. There were 434 children including my sister Jean and brother Graham.

Mr. Fairs sent me to the School of Art in Park Road to do typing and business studies. In 1979 I joined Cooper & Tanner to sell houses and to be a professional Auctioneer.

With the local Rotary Club, I have enjoyed working with Frome College in Mock Interviews and Young Photographer and Young Designer competitions but especially 'Youth Speaks' where Frome College often won at local and District levels.

Frome Rotary Club are now pleased to manage the charity set up by Reg Gilbert — Gift — which gives monies to students for international travel.

Memories of my time at Frome Grammar School mean a great deal to me and I send best wishes to Emma Reynolds, the very hard-working and greatly respected Principal, and to every teacher and every pupil privileged to be involved.

12.3 Community College

- **Jensen Button 1993-1997**

Jensen was born in 1980 and brought up at Vobster. By the time he joined the College he was a successful karting champion. He went on to be FI motor racing world champion in 2009. He is now a respected member of the motor racing world in 2018 winning the Super GT series of races.

- **Tina Waller 1995-2000**

During the centenary year I met several people with fond memories of the College. Tina kindly agreed to send hers.

Frome Community College was a formative and transformative place for me. As someone torn between the cerebral and the artistic all my life, Frome College gave me the space and support to develop in every direction. It gave me the foundations to build the life I saw for myself.

Perhaps it's my love of a good bargain that makes me so fiercely proud of the very high academic grades I was able to achieve at the College without paying a penny of tuition costs, or maybe it's my socialist streak that delights in socking it to the fancy private school system that charges so handsomely for such educational outcomes, but probably - and most sincerely - it simply reflects my firm belief that if you put a child with ambition and dreams into an environment that nurtures those ambitions and dreams then truly magical things can happen. Frome College was just that for me - a place where magical things happened.

College theatre productions (and my beloved drama teacher Mike Walker) put me on the path to my first career as a professional actor, and my love of books (enhanced by English teachers Steve Neal, Rob Moger, and James Chadwick) has led me to my second: running Frome's fabulous long-standing independent bookshop Winstone's Hunting Raven Books.

I am so proud of the school and look forward to sending my two young daughters there when their time comes.

- **Kerry Wilkinson 1993-1999**

Kerry Wilkinson is an author who has had bestselling eBooks in the UK, Canada, Australia and South Africa.

In 2011, he became one of the United Kingdom's most-successful self-published authors but has since worked with 'traditional' publishers.

In March 2012, it was announced he was one of Amazon's top 10 bestselling UK-born authors worldwide for 2011. In August 2012, it was reported he was one of Amazon's top-10 bestselling Kindle authors in 2012.¹

In August 2013, The Bookseller reported that Pan Macmillan had bought two more books from Wilkinson, including a standalone crime novel, *Down Among The Dead Men*; and *Something Wicked*, a spin-off from *Playing With Fire*, book five of the Jessica Daniel series.

Watched: When Road Rage Follows You Home (Dec 2013) and *Crossing The Line* (January 2014) became Wilkinson's seventh and eighth successive novels to appear in Amazon's top 20 crime chart.

In 2018, his coming-of-age novel, *Ten Birthdays*, won Young Adult romance novel of the year at the [Romantic Novelists' Association Awards](#).

In 2020, his novel, *Close To You*, won Best eBook Original Novel at the [International Thriller Writers Awards](#)

- **Margaret Binney 1988-present**

Someone who epitomises the distinct nature of the College and the town it serves, for me has to be Margaret.

She and her husband Mike were involved in the early days of the creation of the Frome Collegians Football Club. She joined the Parent Staff Association and was an outstanding Chair.

Margaret then supported a number of activities which were designed to help those who find learning difficult. This included Summer Holiday Courses and after school and even Breakfast Clubs. She was a widening participation tutor at the Community Education Centre.

Later Margaret joined the College Governing Body. Right up to the present-day Margaret is involved with lifelong learning via her role as a Director of Frome Community Education.

Her approach can be seen in these extracts from a piece we asked her to write for the publication.

The PSA was a bond between the students, their families and the teachers who would be so important in their lives. There were the usual rounds of selling uniforms, serving teas and coffees at parent's evenings and summer fetes. We decorated the church before the

Christmas carol concert whilst listening to the talented musicians. In one entrepreneurial year we raffled a car, towing it between local towns and surprising ourselves with how much we actually raised.

But more than this the PSA provided a platform for the parent's voice. We were able to discuss matters directly with the staff.

I was lucky enough to serve under a great chairman of Governors and I learnt a lot about governance.

Often a governing body is seen as very distanced from the wider school community, but it is when you know the school and the community it serves that you can make judgements as to whether it is being run effectively.

- **Kelyn Bacon** -who left College in 1992 has been appointed High Court Judge.
- **Sophie Westlake** - one of 3 sisters who attended the College - was appointed MBE for her work as a Policy advisor on the COVID task force at the Cabinet Office.
- **Nigel Mintram** - Over the years the College lost a number of staff who died in post including one in World War 2. One of these was Nigel Mintram who had taught History and Government and Politics at the College throughout his career. A Deputy Head of Year and school governor he was involved in community activities including Drama. **Appendix 7 is the newspaper tribute to him. An** example of how the community values those who give their careers to the town.
- **Barry Cooper** – Barry a painter and sculptor based in Frome is renowned for his international vision. He has contributed to many arts projects involving the young people in Frome. For the College campus he installed the Aerolith, and he was the visionary behind the ECOS project.

12.4 The Governors – The records at Taunton stretch back to the organisations governing the College in the nineteenth century. The College has been most fortunate in having long serving governors. At one point there were separate governing bodies for the FE and School parts. Amongst these Mr A P Ames, a local solicitor, served 25 years as Chair of the County Secondary School. Mr G W H Cruttwell gave distinguished service and was remembered by Cruttwell Block (C Block). Representatives of local business Grant Beswick and Peter Bardgett saw the College through the expansionist years of the Community College.

12.5 Parents Staff Association

In the days of the Community College the PSA was a vibrant part of the life of the College and town, the Annual Fete being a summer highlight. The PSA pulled off many ambitious projects. Particularly memorable was the Millennium Ball which included the burial of a time capsule.

13. Pupil/ Student life / notable moments in the College History

12.6 A sense of community

The tradition was set by the first head Trevor Foster. In the 1925 magazine he wrote addressing the pupils

'You have often heard me refer to your duty in guarding the good reputation of the school, also being loyal to your school. On these occasions I have in mind your behaviour when outside school, but these things apply equally to what you do when in school. You will find that you will work and play with more energy and enjoyment if you work and play hard for your School and House. You will get plenty of success, fun and real happiness if you aim at the ideal of service to a community whether it be your house, school, town or country'

This was continued through by Gilbert Fairs who wrote

'a school is a community of people living and eating, working and worshipping, playing together and serving one another'

The Inspectors who visited in 1960 concluded 'One of the distinctive features of this school is its strong and healthy corporate life'. The school has its trials and difficulties, but it surmounts them through the devotion and unity of its members. It is certainly a happy school'

This sense of community remains at the heart of the College to this day.

12.7 International Links

There is a strong tradition of international links. School exchanges have been held with Frome's twin towns of Chateau- Gontier in France and Murrhardt in Germany.

Reg Gilbert who first established the Duke of Edinburgh in the School in 1957 took two expeditions which featured in the national press. The expedition to the Sahara in 1973 involved an 8000-mile trek in Land Rover which was waved off by Graham Hill the World F1 champion. The expedition to Papua and New Guinea in 1981-82 was approved by The Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council and would even today be considered groundbreaking. Reg had served with the RAF in WW2 and also took expeditions to Iceland (1968) and Ghana.

As Dennis Barnard noted the GIFT charity now administered by Rotary but set up by Reg supports young people from the town who wish to travel.

In 2004 the College had a most ambitious exchange with the Mathieson Music Trust in India based on the talented musicians from both schools.

12.8 The Creative School

Drama – From the earliest days there were school plays. Twelfth Night was produced in 1925. In the 1950's the grammar school put on Gilbert and Sullivan operas The Mikado and Iolanthe. The Merlin saw many memorable performances, but the highlights were those produced in the 1990's

on ECOS. The Rock Opera 'Tommy' was followed by a production of Pink Floyd's 'The Wall'. This production went on tour to the Czech Republic. **Art.** The College has been renowned for its Art department which incorporated Pottery and Photography. The Summer Art Exhibition is a highlight of each year. **Dance** – has also featured strongly in recent years with Dance Shows attracting large audiences. Frome has fostered young talent with its productions such as pantomimes. In turn the College has developed talent which continues to feature in local drama and music events.

13.4 School Meals



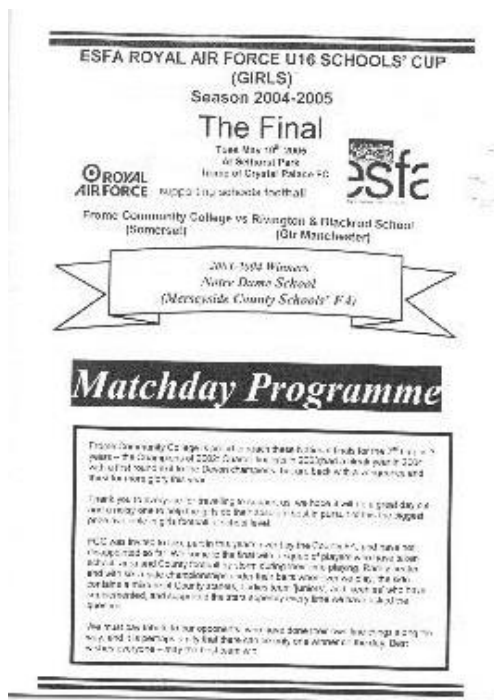
In the early years some pupils had to eat sandwiches amidst the wood shavings in the craft rooms! The Girl Boarders lived in Northcote and as the photo shows a dining room was established in Northcote. (The boy boarders lived in houses in town)

During World War 2 Mr Gregory and the boys grew vegetables on the school field. These kept the school kitchens supplied with potatoes and veg all winter. Somehow the 3 schools who were on site at the end of World War 2 crammed together for lunch.

By the 1970's the College was serving meals from 4 different areas of the Campus The Meal service is now operated under contract by a private catering company.

13.5 Sports Successes

Amongst many successes over the years the Under 16 Girls Soccer teams stand out, having won the national cup on two occasions.



13.6 Charity work

Throughout its 100 years the College has looked out to the wider community. Working back from modern day non-uniform days, we can pick out the rag weeks which College students held in the 1960's. In World War 2 a whole series of schemes were supported including collecting 364 eggs for Frome Victoria Hospital. The School Youth Squad dug a vegetable patch for the Hospital.

13.7 Student magazines - Over the years the College has had many magazines.

There are bound copies in the Record Office in Taunton and Frome Museum of the County Secondary School magazines.

In recent years there were long runs for **FROMAGE** and **GRAPEVINE**



Frome College News celebrated the 75th anniversary in 1996



13.8 DoE / Ski Trips / Battlefields of the First World War

There is a strong tradition of expeditions. There has been an unbroken run from the time of Reg Gilbert of the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Thousands of students have benefitted, and Steve Marsh should be credited for his outstanding leadership over many years.

Roland Hurrell led the Year 9 trip to the First World War Battlefields on the Western Front for 25 years, taking over 1000 students, some of whom were able to visit a relative's memorial.

The annual ski party has given thousands of students the opportunity to experience the Alps and skiing.

13.9 Memorable Single events

Over the years the College had exciting moments. Possibly the most memorable was when M Block roof was blown off via a storm. (Fortunately, at night when no students were on site)

13.10 Uniform

From the start the College students have worn a uniform. Frome Museum has a collection particularly from the Grammar School era.

In the County Secondary Schools Days, the boarders wore a brown uniform. The Grammar School was a mix of brown and gold. As was the norm in those days, boys wore a cap.



The comprehensive moved to a blue uniform and as time went on post-16 students no longer had to wear uniform.

When Barry Bates became head, he instituted a review with parents of uniform. The Parent Association advocated a sweatshirt and no ties - much easier to wash, wear and afford. The Somerset Standard sensed the opportunity for a community debate - **See Appendix 8**

In common with other schools, the College has in recent years moved back to a more formal uniform.

13.11 Awards

Over the years the College received a number of awards in recognition of the quality of its work. Here are 3 which illustrate the range

- **Queens Anniversary Award in 2002 was awarded to ECOS**
- **Investors in People** - for the quality of the support which the College gave to its staff
- **Dyslexia Friendly School** - a national award to recognise schools whose procedures and teaching quality supports students with Dyslexia.

Sources

- **Archives** – A large number of documents about the College History are deposited at the South West Heritage Centre at Taunton. The Centre will arrange a visit and can supply a summary of what is available.
- **Frome Museum** – Go to the museum website (<https://fromemuseum.wordpress.com/>) then press the CATALOGUE button further down the page. Then press SEARCH.
- **Local Newspapers** – The College in many years had its own column in the local papers and these provide a rich source of information.
Somerset Standard
Frome Times
- **Books-**
Derek Gill – Frome School Days pub. 1985 – covers the County Secondary school and Grammar School up to 1945
Coopers Company School in Frome 1939-45 ed George Perry

Malcolm Lloyd - Co-ordinator of Community Education 1988 -2003 - remembers

Firstly, when I arrived in 1988 the College was already heavily focussed on Community involvement. Sports teams rented the pitches, the College organised a summer softball league, scouts and guides met in the evenings, and evening classes were thriving. The campus housed the Leisure Centre and Merlin Theatre, and it was, to a good extent, a community college. It had no gates!

While waiting in the staff room for one of the panels at my interview, Bridget Hallsworth told me that we needed a Nursery. **Littleoaks** opened in 1989 and still exists today as **The Wyvern Nursery**. (In 2024 it is now known as little Discoveries) One of my first meetings in 1988 was with The Family Centre (Ann Wallis and Shelagh Fleming) about holiday activities. **FAHA (Frome Association for Holiday Activities)** was formed that October. It closed in 2013 after 25 years of providing exciting activities during the school breaks. So important for families who could not afford holidays out of town.

I suppose that these stories highlight the fact that Frome was already enjoying its Community College and was ripe for the development that my appointment reflected. We had 1,200 adult students per week with 150 Potters, 150 Artists and 50 Weavers. We were an exam centre for **Access to Higher Education (especially Nursing)** and of course GCSE and A Level (part time).

Margaret Binney –headed up **Out of Hours Learning and Summer School** – This included the EdEx project introducing nervous Year8 students to the College in the two terms leading up to their entry into Year 9. She also ran Summer School and the Arts and Crafts on The Mount – still going up to a year ago!

Russell Coates – Head of Ceramics – led trips to Crete and Morocco, building a Snake Kiln behind Comm Ed!!

Comm Ed supported the **Toy Library** – based at The Family Centre,

Young People Frome This was a Frome-based Youth Service in part a response to the savage cuts to the County Youth Service.

Jenny Dale – Vocational Training Co-ordinator – looked after FETE (**Frome Education and Training Enterprise**) which was the vehicle to bring training opportunities into Frome.

I think this shows that with some “Core” funding, the flower can blossom.

My recollection of the transfer from Park Road to Bath Road meant that, not only did we get The Comm Ed Centre, but we also transformed the Art Department, built two IT suites and

created the most amazing Technology Department (from resistant materials all the way through to food tech.)

As an incubator we enabled others to grow. **Frome Swing Band** flourished because we gave a College music teacher free use of the music room in the evening until they had built a big enough group to enable them to pay rent. It took two terms!

Frome Festival received seed funding from Comm Ed and free rooms for workshops in exchange for us being a Sponsor. Just look how that has grown!

The story of the Teaching Assistant taking courses and then becoming a teacher was replicated many times over. The mature students who studied with college A Level Biology group is another classic. Would we let adults into classes today?

Open access to computers and the photocopier in our reception enabled many a Frome business to start.

Don't forget, it wasn't just us. Remember the great shows on ECOS, the theatre trips abroad, the swimming club? Lots of other people made it work too.

I could go on.... At its height, our Community College was amazing.

Were we lucky? Well, luck is when preparation meets opportunity. Yes, we were lucky!

Malcolm Lloyd

Appendix 2 - Letter - withdrawing a son needed on the farm

21. 1. 47.

~~W. W. W. W.~~
~~W. W. W. W.~~
W. Bath.

Dear Sir,

I thank you for your letter of the 14th. Since asking for Michael's release from school, I have lost the only regular worker I had. I therefore regard it as most essential I should have him at home for the coming harvest I now give notice for him to leave at the end of this term & enclose £10 for his withdrawal.

Yours truly,

~~W. W. W. W.~~

End of further education in Frome

Axe is ready to fall on college syllabous

FURTHER Education at Frome College must close. This is the decision of Somerset County Council education chiefs.

On Wednesday a confidential report making the stock proposal was being prepared at County Hall in Bath.

It will be distributed to members of the county's education committee, probably on Monday.

The committee will be asked to recommend the officers' views next Thursday, endorsed by chief education officer Jennifer Catton.

At the heart of the crisis is the fact that it costs nearly £3,500 a year to provide further education for a student at Frome, compared with £2,100 at other Somerset colleges.

"From the emotional point of view it means basically that it's two fingers to Frome and whatever happens will happen at Trowbridge."

The close verdict follows an investigation by Dr William Gregg, principal education officer, further and

by **Jack Lundin**

implications of FE closure.

1. Continue further education, retaining the college's dual school and FE status.

2. Close further education in Frome.

3. Merge FE courses with the existing Bath Road school, which has 1,300 pupils aged 13 to 18.

Frome College is unique. It is the smallest, single-chest educational institution in the county combining a school with a small further education college education service.

At the heart of the crisis is the fact that it costs nearly £3,500 a year to provide further education for a student at Frome, compared with £2,100 at other Somerset colleges.

annually) within the community school.

● The possible loss of 20 governors of Frome College.

● The loss of a level in education, such as A levels in day, evening, weekends, and some Saturdays, accounts and some Secretary of Education's "because of the high quality of teaching and training" and "employment training" currently being followed by 600 enrolled students.

● The requirement in the future for about 600 students to seek provision at Trowbridge, Bath and other FE Colleges. "The most vulnerable students, those least mobile for health or lack of confidence reasons, would 'opt out' altogether," he warned.

● A loss, widely felt within the institution and the town of the enrichment that our FE staff and facilities currently provide.

● The need to make "alternative arrangements for the management and funding of FE courses would continue with 3,000 enrollments

Mr Henry Hobhouse, chairman of Somerset County Council, is one of the 20 governors of Frome College.

It was only three weeks ago that the college's new building was opened as a "building of excellence" for students on two-year BTEC engineering courses and apprentices on day release courses from local firms.

Mr Fisher's sad scenario if councillors endorse their officers' recommendation on Thursday will come as a surprise to many. £47.5% were the college's marketing coordinator and business studies teacher, gave a public assurance that 95 per cent of FE courses would continue in Frome even if further education was axed.

In an apparent contradiction to Mr Fisher's warning of significant job losses amongst FE lecturers and support staff, Mr Marsh last month reassured FE teachers who feared for their jobs.

go at factory

THIRTY FIVE workers at Frome firm Weston Hyde are to be made redundant in the latest jobs cuts in the town.

It will be the fourth company in five months to cut staff, making a total of 276 jobs lost in Frome.

Weston Hyde Products, based at Vallis Road, employs 350 people and produces PVC foil used in medical, nursery and stationery supplies.

Managers say the job losses are the result of the company concentrating its production on one type of foil after suffering a loss on its rigid foil last year.

Union officials estimate about 50 jobs will be lost with people who are retiring not being replaced.

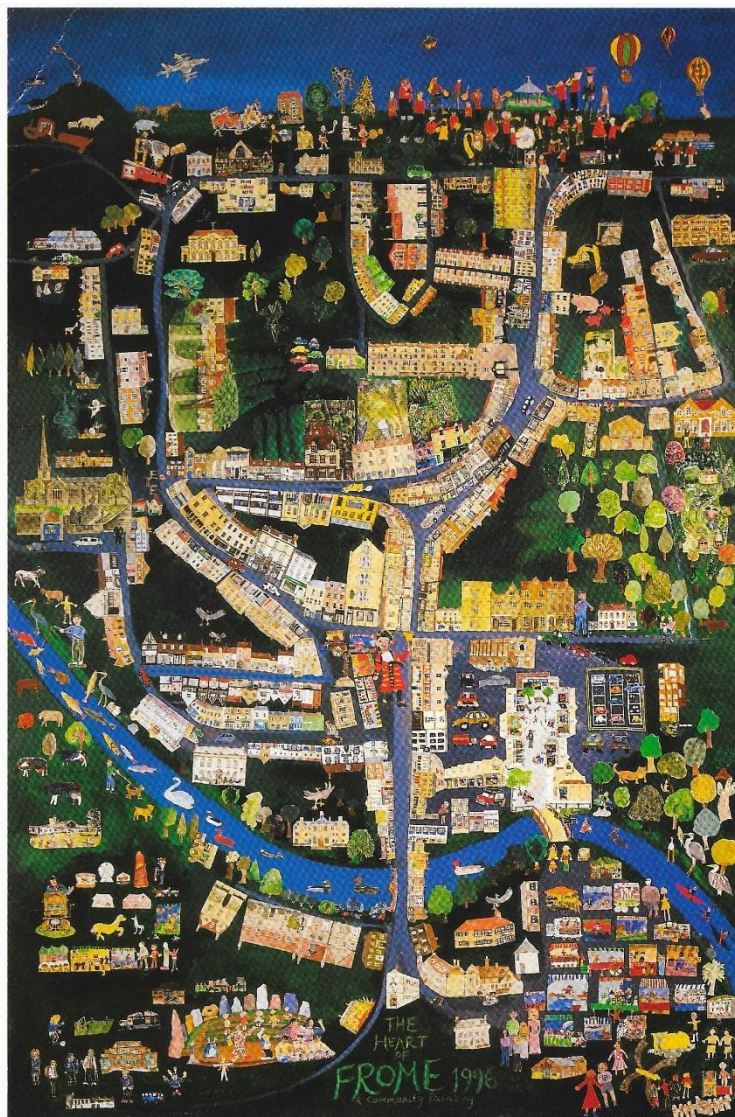
Mr Les Etherington, of the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union, said: "About 50 jobs in total will go, due to not replacing a number of jobs created by early or normal retirement. "The first thing from the last in, first out" they means young people's jobs."

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Have and have nots Romanian thanks Summer time

Appendix 4 - The heart of Frome Map



FROMME TIMES

THE TOWN'S OWN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

They're Back for Music Hall show



POPULAR members of the Woodlanders will be starring in the Olde Tyme Music Hall being presented by the Fromme Rotary and Fromme Setwood Rotary Clubs of Fromme at the Memorial Theatre, Frome on 8th and 9th March including Theima ('I'm Not Well') Moore and master of ceremonies, David Millard.

The show, which also includes performers from the Beckington Players, the Fromme Operatic Society and Danceworks, will benefit the Frome Hospital Appeal, the Memorial Theatre and other Rotary charities. Tickets, on sale now at the box office, are £6.50 throughout.

Over £50,000

College successful in Media Arts bid

FROMME Community College is delighted to announce that it has been successful in its bid to become a specialist college.

The Department for Education and Skills announced the list of successful applicants this week and the college has been selected for its chosen specialism, media arts. Until the latest round of bids, there were just seven media arts colleges in the country. The specialist schools programme will bring additional funds to the college.

To be able to bid at all, the college had to raise £50,000. This was comfortably exceeded thanks to a fantastic response to the college bid prospectus which was designed by Mercer

the schools in the Frome Federation arts groups, notably the Merin Theatre. The decision is therefore good news for the whole community.

Barry Bates, principal, commented, "We were always totally committed to a scheme which would help all the schools in the Frome Federation."

The specialism - media arts - was chosen to reflect the strength of Frome in the arts but also because it fits so well into the ten year vision for teaching and learning at the college. Mike Walker, who with Barry Bates led the production of the bid, explains, "The digital revolution means that our young people in their daily lives - at work or at home - will be using multimedia technology. We strongly believe that



Celebrating the good news at Frome College - Barry Bates (principal - left) and Michael Walker (head of drama).

arts, Barry Bates stressed,

2002

Police fears over accident blackspot

POLICE say they are concerned about the safety of drivers after the latest smash at an accident blackspot near Frome. A Ford Escort XR3 went out of control on a bend along the A3110 outside Norton St Philip which has claimed one life this year and has been the scene of several other accidents. Mendip district councillor Catherine Mack, who lives near the scene of the crash on Tuesday morning, rushed

to help the driver, Mrs Annie Steele, of Chipstow. Frome-based Chief Inspector Peter Last said: "There have been a number of accidents there and I am very concerned about that particular bend in the road. Something seems to have happened to the road surface to make it very slippery."

Mrs Steele told police her car skidded as she took the bend while heading towards the village from Bath.

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UK monolith contributed by ARC First slab for 'Stonehenge'

THE FIRST giant stone slab has been lowered into position at a new 'Stonehenge' amphitheatre being built in Frome to celebrate closer links with Europe.

The finishing touches were added on Monday to the foundations for the first Portland Stone monolith, supplied by Frome quarry company ARC South West, which was put in place on Saturday.

Six European countries have so far committed themselves to providing stones to the open-air theatre, which is sited on the Frome College campus next to the Merlin Theatre.

It is expected that 12 stones will be in position when the amphitheatre opens next year, with space to fit in a contribution from every European Community country should the membership continue to grow.

The British stone, standing 4.1 metres high, will be sculpted by artists Larry Kneel, of Pettauch Lane, Ditton Marsh, and Barry Cooper, of Summer Hill, Frome.

Mr Cooper said it may be two or three weeks before the carving work begins and he is still discussing the design with Mr Kneel.

He said: "We are thinking in terms of bringing primitive imagery into it and we



As the first monolith is lowered into place, there is a celebratory glass of champagne for, from the left, Barry Bates (orthopaed of Frome College), Michael Walker (theatre director), Barrie Bailley (chairman of Theatre Association), and Peter Chapman of Foster Yeoman quarries.

also want to include the idea of democracy. We will bring other people in to help us if we need to."

The tiers of the amphitheatre, which form the seating area, are almost complete and grass is being

New labs for Oakfield School



Mr Clive Lewis, head of science at Oakfield School, with pupils working on the new work tops.

SCIENCE laboratories at Oakfield School in Frome have been brought into the 1990s after a major refurbishment.

The two laboratories at Oakfield Middle School, used by seventh and eighth year pupils, have been fitted with new work surfaces and fittings at a cost of £36,000.

Most of the money has come from the central Somerset County Council education budget, with some from the school's own funds, replacing equipment which dates back to 1964.

Head of science at the school, Mr Clive Lewis, said: "It has gone down very well with the pupils. This is the

Harvest festival in a pub

A HARVEST celebration is held every year at the Royal Oak, Frome. This has become a tradition as the pub and is known as the Royal Oak "Harvest Festival".

Over the past few years all funds raised have been donated to Critchall School, Frome, and the headmaster

Firefighting

FIREFIGHTING in Frome through the decades is the subject of an exhibition at Frome Museum starting this Wednesday (October 2).

Retained fireman, Mr Robert Gill, who suggested the exhibition, has spent several months interviewing old firefighters in Frome and collecting photographs and pictures of the 1923 Chiswick Street fire and Queen Victoria's Jubilee Procession as well as the old fire station in Christchurch Street, West

Marquess breaks his silence

Event planned to celebrate the life of lecturer who died after fall College tutor will not be forgotten

By Aliya Frostick

FRIENDS and colleagues of Nigel Mintram, who died suddenly three weeks ago, are planning a celebration of his life.

Mr Mintram, who was 38, taught history, ICT and government and politics at Frome Community College where he began his career as a newly qualified teacher in 1990.

Mr Mintram died at Frenchay Hospital in Bristol after falling on his head while in Bath.

He underwent several operations to relieve blood clots on his brain. He was known throughout the college for his inimitable sense of

humour and was an inspiration to all of his pupils.

College principal Barry Bates said: "Teachers who devote their lives and careers to a school over a period of time touch many individual lives and enrich the communities they serve.

"Nigel was one of those teachers. Our thoughts lie with him and his family at this sad time."

Mr Mintram was a gifted actor and most recently performed in The Lion in Winter for the Frome Drama Club.

He had also been asked to play the Baron in the current production of Cinderella and as a tribute, a framed photo of Mr Mintram sits on one of the set walls.

The celebration of his life will be

held at the Merlin Theatre on the college campus on Sunday March 30 at 3pm.

It will include music, drama and plenty of the humour that Mr Mintram himself would have appreciated.

There will be an opportunity for those wishing to make a donation to do so.

Roland Hurrell, who teaches history and government and politics at Frome College, is currently collating ideas as to how the donations could be spent and would welcome any suggestions.

There will be a meeting on Monday January 6 at 6.30pm in the foyer of the Merlin Theatre to plan the event.

Any suggestions or queries



POPULAR MAN: Nigel Mintram, who died in hospital 05/78/50
should be referred to either Mr Hurrell or Joan Pattison on 01373 465353.

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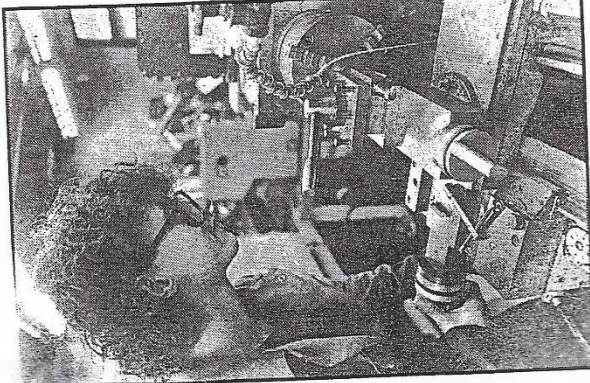
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Learning to...
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• STEPHANY WOODHEAD reports on a place of learning that's also a community in its own right

A college lifestyle is in peril

FROME college is a unique institution. The smallest non-specialist college in the country, it combines an ordinary, with a tiny further education campus, tucked behind Bath Road, also incorporates the Merlin Theatre and Sports Centre, both open, like the college itself, for general community focus. But the unit's community focus of the college is under threat. Last

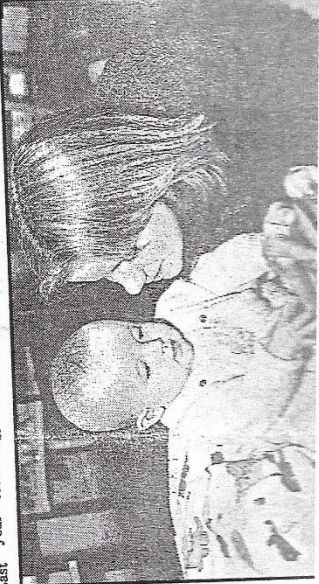


■ Engineering apprentice Mark Aven at a lathe: "I went to school at Frome College and now I am back for my work. It think it is a bad idea to it down close and send everybody out of town."



■ Washing up in the special needs unit for young people with learning difficulties. Here's James Norman with tutor Cryste Morrifson.

week Somerset county councillors voted to either close the further education department of the college or merge it more closely with the school. Both moves could spell the end for a unique range of courses that have, by law, be provided by a school. Part-time adult education and a huge array of evening classes, a special-needs unit for mentally handicapped teenagers, under-fives nursery school, one- and day-year technology courses, day-



Today the hybrid health school employs 26 full-time staff, 100 casual teachers, and scores of technicians and support workers at Park Road.

In 1955 the unit became a technical college, but was already unviable and in the early 1960s merged with Bath college at Fildes. But with the coming of new legislation in 1974, the merger ended, and the further education was grafted on to the existing Bath Road school to become Frome College.

First line of attack, says principal John Fisher, will be a campaign to persuade councillors to change their minds. Already there are powerful allies, including Somerset chairman and school governor Henry Hobhouse. But if the council sticks to its decision, governors will write to Education Secretary John Major, and the ruling bodies of courses such as BTEC, asking for special permission to carry on within a school. The college dates back to 1902, when in the best tradition of Victorian businessmen througher built an arts and science block to educate his workers at Park Road.

But the unit's community focus of the college is under threat. Last

PET OF THE WEEK



CHOCOLATE-coloured Labrador Retriever, and loves to play but is not suitable with small children. Anyone who can help find a home for this dog should phone the home on Bath Road at the RSPCA Claverton from 10.30am to 4pm on 01224 493400. The 18-month-old dog has been at the RSPCA Claverton since March waiting to be rehomed, but there are still other cats at the home. He is house-trained, a good

LETTERS

Team spirit instills pride

Spider service

Parking

I ENJOYED your recent article in the Star regarding the taxi drivers' call for a ban on private cars in the centre of Bath (June 6). I am a motorist but something must be done. Fortunately I have the right answer. I shall call it the 'spider service'. Parking areas, say four, are established a few miles outside Bath, north, south, east and west.

From these stations buses would run through the city to a station on the other side, crossing the city at least every ten minutes.

The bus depot would be removed from the city centre and the stations would double as depots. All traffic would be parked at the station of their choice, and passengers would board the bus to go into the city.

PARKING WOULD BE ALLOWED ON THE STREETS.
J R MIDDLETON,
25 Nippongate Way,
Midsomer Norton.

THE belief that there is a link between school uniform and good education can be likened to the circus trainer who believes a dog with no legs must be deaf because it cannot jump through a hoop on command.

My own experience in the USA shows it is the careful cultivation of the team spirit and representative out of school activities, together with the insistence that teachers are important role models for children, that do most to give American children their undoubted confidence and pride in themselves.

I have met the head of Frome College, Mr Bates, and, by appearance and from the thoroughly professional role model that I expect, a lot to team spirit can be renewed, the children will want to wear something that associates them with Frome College. They will not, however, want to be called a uniform.

ALAN J SMITH
Colinet Way,
Frome.

REFERENCE your front page report about the new school uniform being introduced at Frome College (June 6). I say, "Good for the new Principal." From my observations of pupils, it can only be an improvement. I

have never seen such a bedraggled lot! School uniform is a great "class" leveller and should be much tidier than the current "anything goes" policy. More power to Mr Bates' elbow!

School uniform

YES I certainly agree with tightening up the standard of pupils' dress at Frome Community College for the PUPILS' OWN GOOD in later years (report, June 6). They have had too much freedom of expression in the past 30 to 50 years.

The pupils will thank Mr Bates in the years to come.
MRS D VEASEY
Whitshire Barton,
Frome.

REGARDING your school uniform report (June 6), if the principal looks at his pupils, he should see that at Frome College at least three-quarters cannot afford such luxuries. I can't, for sure! Before he changes the pupils to sensible dress, he should also look at the staff, some of whom wear tattered old jeans. Perhaps if all the staff set a good example it would go a long way towards smartening up the pupils.

DAVID ELLIOTT
Whacombe Road,
Frome.

Our dog's a perfect pet

Pit bull terriers

ON receiving my copy of the Star (June 6), I was surprised to find a photograph of my American pit bull terrier, "Cuddling dogs is the right action". I hope that I shall be able to reply to this letter.

Firstly I would like to ask the writer of the letter. If they feel so strongly about the subject, why they could not back up their opinions with their name and address! Do they fear reprisals from the "socially irresponsible" owners?

As one of the owners of the two dogs mentioned in the letter and knowing well the other dog's owner I can state most positively that neither of us are lacking in our sense of social responsibility. We are both parents and take the matter of having a pet in the family most seriously.

We are not animal fanatics who place our pets above other people's children and property. Our dogs are not allowed to roam and are kept under strict control when out in the community.

We have owned Mindy for nearly four years. My middle child was less than a year when she was introduced into the family and within two weeks they were firm friends and remain so. My son is now a boisterous four-and-a-half year old.

I invite anyone to come and see them together, when my son gets up in the mornings his first words are always for Mindy. Maybe even more convincing that the pit bull terrier can be a loyal, gentle and trustworthy dog, would be the sight of my ten month old son climbing over, sitting and laying with Mindy. Being ten months he tends to prod, poke and pull the dog but she does not even try to pull away.

As a mother who lives for her children, if I had one doubt about their safety I would not have the dog. I can sleep soundly knowing mine and other children are safe around our dog.
MRS ANDREA TAGG
3 Priddy Close,
Tweron,
Bath.

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Headteachers/ Principals at Frome County Secondary School / Frome College 1921 -2021

Trevor Foster- 1921-1946

Gilbert Fairs- 1946 – 1966

John Fisher -1966 -1991

Barry Bates -1991-2008

Wendy Missons- 2008-2012

Gavin Ball- 2012-2017

Emma Reynolds- 2017-present