

The Story of Cold Bath House

by Peter Harrod

From the Garton Archive: Item of Interest No 34

No doubt many readers will have walked or driven past the north side of the Arboretum in Lincoln being blissfully unaware of the existence of a former small parish known as Cold Bath House. Cold Bath House parish was in fact created in 1837, having an area of 1 acre and being located at the junction of Lindum Terrace and Eastfield Road. It also forms part of the long and complex history of Lincoln Grammar School, more recently renamed Lincoln School.



North part of the former Cold Bath House parish: Photo courtesy of Phil Gresham

Typewritten notes available in the Lincoln central Library by local historian E.I. Abell claim that the site was once part of the great Benedictine Abbey of St Mary of York, housed in what is now known as Monks Abbey on Monks Road. The house closed in 1539, and its lands passed into private hands and became known as the Manor of the Black Monks, so named because of their black apparel. Later, the land became the Monks Leys Common, part of which was used to form the Arboretum.

A windmill known as Cold Bath Mill occupied the site for many years, acquiring its name from a spring which ran into its cellar. The spring had a reputation for possessing healing qualities, but it was said that it was too cold for most people to use it to bathe in. Robert Cottam had been the miller until his son, George, took over in the late 1830s. George probably died about 1865, and by that time windmills were becoming redundant and steam powered mills were taking over. The Mill was originally a wind and water mill, but the Lincolnshire Chronicle in 1932 reported that it no longer had a sufficiently strong stream to turn a water mill. The rare photograph below is taken from the Lincoln Central Library collection, presented to the Library by Miss L Robinson in June 1951.



Henry Kirke Hebb, solicitor, clerk to the urban sanitary committee, town clerk to Lincoln Corporation for 30 years and Chairman of the Lincoln and Lindsey Bank commissioned Cold Bath House to be built in about 1867. The house was perched on the cliff edge and incorporated the spring in its cellar, and had a room designed to entertain the entire City Council. Hebb lived at the house until his death in 1902.

In 1905 Mrs Matilda Richardson inhabited the house. She was the widow of William Wright Richardson, a director of Doughty, Son & Richardson Ltd. In 1907 all the Lincoln parishes were incorporated into a single Lincoln parish, and after seventy years Cold Bath House parish was relegated to the history books. Cold Bath House was the only building in the parish and the number of residents remained static at five. This one acre, single house parish was the smallest in Lincoln both in size and number of residents.

During the Great War of 1914-18 Lincoln School was evacuated from its newly built premises on Wragby Road, and occupied temporary accommodation on and around the present hospital car park site at the corner of Sewell Road and St Anne's Road (see Occasional Paper 14 and Item of Interest 27 from the Garton Archive). At that time, Cold Bath House became the home to the Headmaster and the boarders of Lincoln School. Professor Charles Garton's meticulously kept Abstract of the Minutes of the Governors of Lincoln School recorded that 'Coldbath' House was the residence of a Captain Boothby, who had agreed to transfer the lease of the building to the Governors. A meeting of the Special Committee of the Governors on 14th August 1914 reported that Mr Douglas Smith of the Board of Education had expressed his satisfaction with the arrangements made for the accommodation of the boarders. The October 1914 edition of *The Lincolnian* also recorded that: 'The boarders, whom we are glad to see still further increasing in numbers, have very comfortable quarters with the Headmaster in Coldbath House.' (Note that the spelling of Cold Bath House was sometimes conflated.) The cost of fitting Coldbath House for its purpose was recorded in the Governors Minutes as £152. 14s. 0d.

Life in the boarding house must have been quite challenging during the Great War, and this is poignantly captured in the following poem, written by a sixth-former, and appearing in the December 1919 edition of *The Lincolnian*.

Coldbath House 1914-1919

*Matron, let me stay a little, for as yet 'tis early morn,
Let me stay, nay, do not rouse me, spurn not my request with scorn.
'Tis the domit'ry around it, these five years the schoolboys' grouse,
On the chilly winter mornings, seven-fifteen at Coldbath House.*

*Coldbath House that on the terrace overlooks a murky vale,
With the sluggish Witham flowing, bearing sometimes barge's sail.
Many a night from gloomy window gazing 'ere I want to rest,
Did I watch the silver searchlight sweeping heaven from east to west.*

*Many a time I heard alarums silencing the town in fright,
Moaning out to all the warning, 'tis the Terror of the Night.
Then I looked towards the future, far away I seemed to see,
Glorious vision, Peace returning, all the wonder that would be.*

*When the cannon boomed no longer and the flags of hate were furl'd,
In a conference of men, arbiter of all the world.
Saw the House again deserted, and relieved of ponderous load,
Glorying in wanted freedom, School return to Wragby Road.*

K.R.E.T. Form VI

Further research in the Garton Archive has revealed that the author of the poem was Kenneth Roy Eldin Taylor, who was admitted to Lincoln School in September 1914, and left in July 1920. His father was listed as an elementary schoolmaster at Welbourn Elementary School in Lincolnshire. In the Admission Register Kenneth Taylor was entered as a 'day scholar', so I can only assume that he later became a boarder. After leaving Lincoln School, he gained an Open Exhibition to Selwyn College, Cambridge where in 1923 he gained a Third Class degree in the Law Tripos, and later became Solicitor to the Duchy of Lancaster.



Lincoln School Boarders and Staff in the grounds of Coldbath House during the Great War



The same site in February 2015

Sometime during the early 1920s Cold Bath House became Mrs Swan's Nursing Home, but was used during the 1939-45 war as the Headquarters of the Royal Engineers. The nursing home continued until August 1942, when the County Hospital and the nursing home were attacked by a lone German bomber on a hit-and-run raid. The main damage at the County Hospital was to the nurses' home, the operating theatre, the board room and the massage room. No-one was killed, but windows of two of the wards were damaged and some of the patients suffered injuries from flying glass. Mrs Swan's Nursing Home was almost totally destroyed, but no one was injured, and the building was demolished in 1945.



Coldbath House in Ruins
Photograph from Lincoln Central Library Collection

The following story has been submitted to the People's War website by a volunteer from Lincoln CSV Action Desk on behalf of Fred Hurt and has been added to the site with his permission.

Coldbath House Raid

It was Trip Sunday and I'd been out playing with my friend Roy Johnson. We'd been looking around the place but there were some military chaps around so we kept away from them and looked in the back of the house where we found a rowing boat which they had just been varnishing. Of course we had to touch it and get messed up. It started to rain so we hurried off home. I'd forgotten that we were having visitors for tea that day. Roy dashed off home and I was thinking that I was going to get into a row because of the visitors coming. When people came I got to sit in the seat in front of the window which was usually pushed against the wall to keep the table out of the way. Anyway, I'd just got into seat when someone said something about a siren. You could just hear it started to wind up when the bombs actually fell. They just fell out of the rain cloud. People tell me it was five o'clock when they looked up to see the bombs falling down. One of them hit Coldbath House and another landed on the

allotments in St Anne's Road. Another one landed on the Nurses' Home, fortunately on the end mainly used for storage and another fell on a house which is now an old people's home near the prison. When I looked at my seat, there were big, long bits of glass stuck in it. They would have been in my back. My mother had made a sponge cake which was a real treat, and when she tried to cut it, it was full of glass. It looked perfectly alright but it was full of it. I ran down to tell my friend and he'd hardly got home. There were people out and wondered why that was but there were a lot of windows broken down there. We were covered in soot but didn't know it. I was running down the road and a young woman in front of me ran to tell her mother what had happened and that she was all right. It was still raining and it went down her face like rivulets through the soot and she looked a right mess.

E.I Abell's notes recorded that the site was subsequently used as a small holding, but in October 1952 part of it was commissioned for a road improvement, and the rest was landscaped and incorporated into the Arboretum to commemorate the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, some of the cost being met by the Dawber Charity Fund. This increased the area of the arboretum to twenty-one acres (8.8 hectares). The spring was used to create a water feature for the arboretum.

A visit to the site today will reveal some of its former history. The stone building in its grounds, presumably once used as an elaborate summer house for Coldbath House, is still in use as storage for the Arboretum grounds staff, and the site of the spring is still in evidence. There is also an information board which offers something of the history of the site. It is well worth a visit, and it is hoped that this article will serve to conjure up some of its former glories in the imagination on the onlooker.



The former site of Coldbath House in February 2015

Acknowledgements

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I am also grateful to local historian, Phil Gresham, for the photograph of the north end of Cold Bath House on Sewell Road, and for details of the history of Cold Bath House, sourced from his website www.itsaboutlincoln.co.uk which contains a wealth of information about different aspects of the history of Lincoln.

References

Lincoln Central Library records including typewritten notes by local historian E.I. Abell, the Local Illustrative Collection, and the Lincolnshire Chronicle 23rd April 1932

Charles Garton's Abstracts of the Lincoln School Governors' Minutes

Great War editions of *The Lincolnian* magazine

The Garton Archive photograph collection

Wikipedia and other Internet articles including www.itsaboutlincoln.co.uk