

KEYNSHAM & SALTFOORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Next year sees the 50th anniversary of the Great Flood of 1968. This event is etched indelibly on the memories of everyone who lived in the Chew Valley and much of the Bristol area at the time. It brought tragedy and misery, but also many examples of heroism and selflessness. Much has been written about the Flood and at previous anniversaries exhibitions and dramatic productions have been staged to commemorate it.

Yet, apart from one flood level marker, Keynsham has no physical reminder of that night, and no memorial to those who died when their car was swept off the Chew Bridge in the town centre.

The Society believes it is time to rectify this omission and is proposing a project to construct a permanent commemoration of the event. Many bridges along the River Chew were destroyed or irreparably damaged by the flood. One of these was the ancient County Bridge at Keynsham, on the Bitton Road. Built into the north parapet of this was the County Bridge Stone, sometimes known locally as the Abbot's Seat as it may have come from Keynsham Abbey. (An alternative theory, equally plausible, is that it was originally built into a Roman crossing of the River Avon at Trajectus, now generally thought to be at Keynsham.) Older residents have fond memories of sitting with "one foot in Somerset and the other in Gloucestershire". The ancient stone was swept away but later recovered; since then it has been out of sight in various Council archaeology stores.



The Society is planning to re-erect this stone in Keynsham Memorial Park with a commemorative plaque and an explanation of the history of the stone and the events of 10th July 1968 to inform future generations. The project has the support of Keynsham Town Council and permission to use and display the stone has been obtained from B&NES Council.

To display the stone in an appropriate way has a substantial cost and the Society is launching a public appeal to raise £5,000. It is hoped that the memorial will be unveiled on 10th July 2018.

If any readers have a connection with Keynsham and the events of that night and wish to contribute to the appeal, a donation form can be downloaded from the Society's website www.keysalthist.org.uk. Details of how to donate online are also posted on the website.
