

## KIDNAPPERS LANE - A MEMORIAL OF A PAST INCIDENT?

The first mention in print was on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map. R C Barnard, the great historian of Leckhampton, writing in his notebook in 1896, specifically stated that he could offer no explanation for the name. If someone with his knowledge could not do so, so soon after the name was coined, what chance have we today? However, that does not stop arguments over the origin.

It appears to be widely supposed that 'kidnapper' in this case relates in some way to the keeping of goats and leather working. This is very unlikely, if only for the reason that the word has nothing whatever to do with 'napping' leather (ie raising a pile on the material) and still less with young goats. A kidnapper is, strictly and simply, one who steals ('naps' or 'nabs') a child ('kid') or seizes another human being against his or her will, often for ransom.

Similarly (since this thought is also sometimes raised!), one can rule out a connection with the 'knapping' of stone. *Knapping* (note the initial *k*) is the breaking of flint, usually for roadmaking or building purposes but sometimes for use in flint-lock guns or to ignite tinder. There is, for example, a house in Charlton Kings now known as 'Knappings' which was once occupied by a man who engaged in this pursuit. Flint does not occur naturally in the local limestone, clay or alluvial soil. Comparisons too with The Knapp, Knapp Lane, in Cheltenham are red herrings too, as that name relates to the *knap*, or barrow, which was obliterated by the building of St James's station (cp Belas Knap) .

Other possible explanations are offered by James Hodsdon, in *An Historical Gazetteer of Cheltenham*. One is that the word is possibly a corruption of a dialect term, perhaps sharing an origin with Giddynap Lane in Dursley, Glos. The other, more attractive, explanation is that the name is an allusion to a past incident, but if so, no one can produce chapter and verse to prove it.