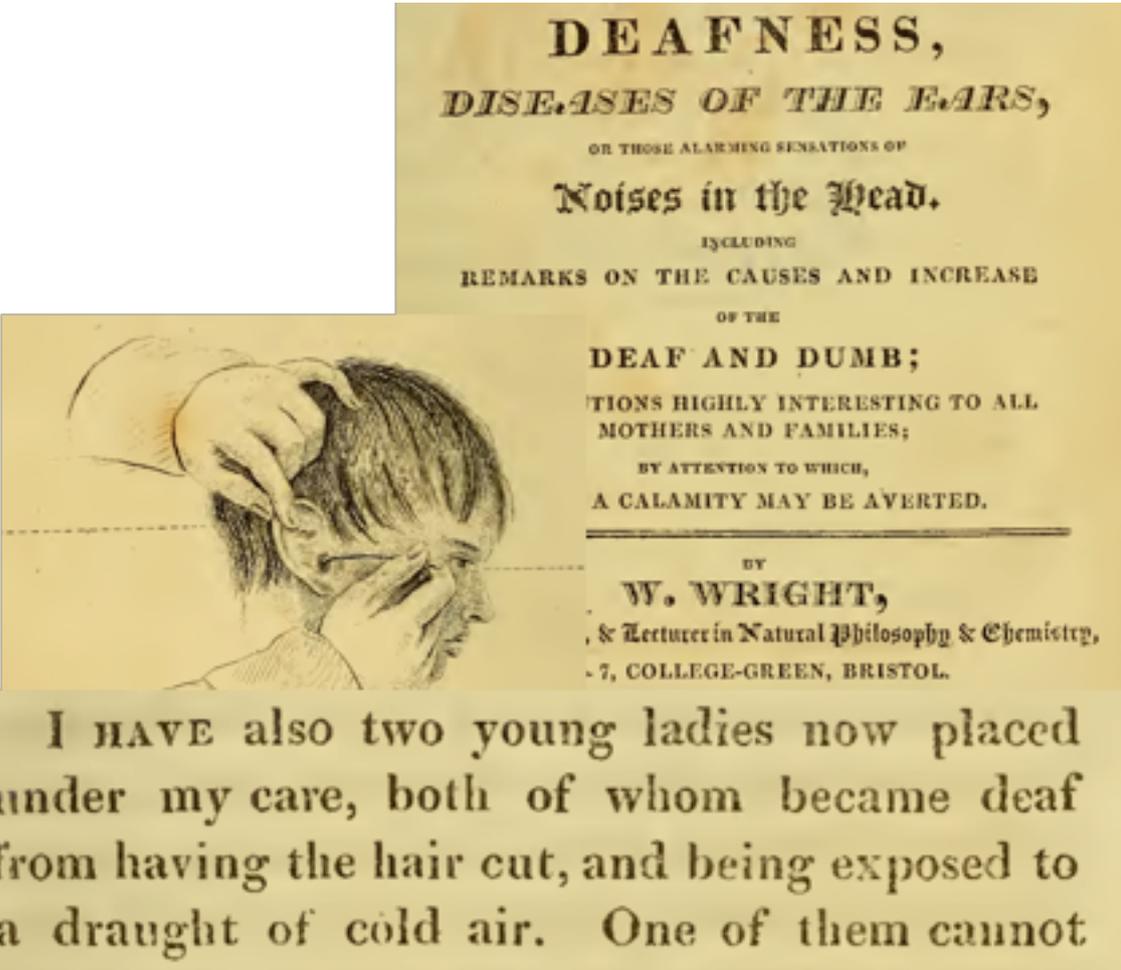


## Bristol Deaf before 1840

Although services were not in place until 1841, there were Deaf people in the community and there was some work on hearing loss.

Mr Wright of College Green published an essay in 1817. He explained how to examine ears and mentioned some of the cases he knew.



**DEAFNESS,**  
**DISEASES OF THE EARS,**  
OR THOSE ALARMING SENSATIONS OF  
**Noises in the Head.**  
INCLUDING  
REMARKS ON THE CAUSES AND INCREASE  
OF THE  
**DEAF AND DUMB;**  
MATTERS HIGHLY INTERESTING TO ALL  
MOTHERS AND FAMILIES;  
BY ATTENTION TO WHICH,  
A CALAMITY MAY BE AVERTED.

BY  
**W. WRIGHT,**  
& Lecturer in Natural Philosophy & Chemistry,  
- 7, COLLEGE-GREEN, BRISTOL.

I HAVE also two young ladies now placed under my care, both of whom became deaf from having the hair cut, and being exposed to a draught of cold air. One of them cannot

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century there was no real provision for hearing loss but gradually dispensaries were set up where people could go to have treatment. This treatment was often rather strange and based on a lack of knowledge of how the ears function and the relationship to speaking.

**DR. BOERHAAVE's RED PILL,**  
No. 2,  
(Sealed with Red Wax),

**F**AMOUS for the Cure of every Stage and Symptom of a Certain Complaint.—It is a melancholy fact, that thousands fall victims to this horrid disease, owing to the unskillfulness of illiterate men, who, by an improper treatment of this direful calamity, not unfrequently cause those foul Ulcerations and Blotches which so often appear on the Head, Face, and Body, with Dimness in the Sight, Noise in the Ears, Deafness, Strictures, obstinate Gleets, Nodes on the Shin-Bones, ulcerated

Many cures sold to the public. The red pill was advertised from 1819 for some time.

Some Deaf people are mentioned in the newspapers. (Bristol Mercury, February 27 1837

Mary Johnson was charged with stealing a pocket-handkerchief, a glove, 2s., &c., from the person of James Lewis. The prosecutor, who is deaf and dumb, deposed, by means of an interpreter, that on Sunday night he met the prisoner in Nelson-street, when she induced him to accompany her to a tavern; and afterwards, whilst passing through Cumberland-street, on the way to her house in Wilder-street, she robbed him of the articles in question, a portion of which was found in her possession. Prisoner pleaded that she had been very intimate with the prosecutor several months, which he denied; and as he declined pressing the case against her, she was discharged.

James Lewis name comes up on a number of occasions. Next on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1839.

Roger Windmill was charged with assaulting Chas. Truceman. The complainant stated that he was in the Sugar-Loaf public-house, Rosemary-street, in company with his brother and a man named Lewis, both of whom were deaf and dumb, when the defendant, who was there, persuaded his brother that he (complainant) had been saying something against him, when his brother, who was of a very hot temper, pulled off his coat and wanted to fight; he (complainant) refused to do so, upon which the defendant said, if he'd stand up he'd knock his — head off; he, however, still refused to fight, and some time afterwards was leaving the house, when the defendant, who had watched for an opportunity, together with another man, fell upon and beat him, the defendant striking him violently in the eye. The defendant said he was not the man who struck the complainant, and called two witnesses, who stated that they saw the affray, and it was another man who committed the assault. The magistrates said there was evidently a mistake with respect to the identity, and dismissed the complaint.

There were other examples where he came to the notice of the police and he spent some time in gaol..

be once whipped.  
James Lewis, remanded on suspicion of stealing rope, was discharged, no owner having been found.  
Stephen Taylor, William Langston, and William Harding.

We have very little information on Deaf lives, at that time.

## **Bristol and Bath**

At the same time, there was a link with Bath. Reverend Fountain Elwin, of the Temple Church in Bristol found a Deaf girl wandering the street and adopted her in his own house.

He moved the family to Bath (around 1832) and his daughter, Jane Elwin, took a strong interest in working with Deaf people. Together they set up a Sunday School, which later on became a school, larger than the Bristol school. In 1840, they set up in 9 Walcot Parade.

### **Bristol v Bath**

However the main trouble started after 1842, when the members of Bristol schools committee had an open meeting to try to raise money and to make people aware so that they could send their children to Bristol.

Unfortunately it seems, Rev Elwin was not present and in 1843, he went ahead with setting up his school formally, as a residential school which took away pupils that the Bristol school expected.

There was a big argument and the Bristol committee sent delegates to Bath and the minutes of the Bristol committee meetings shows how angry they were that Bath would take this action.

### **Bath flourished**

They took in more pupils than Bristol and continued until 1897. In 1868, they also set up a home for adults, which took the money when the school closed.

This Bath Home for Deaf and Dumb women, eventually became Poolemead Centre run by RNID/Action on Hearing Loss