A Short History of Keswick View, formerly Bellevue House and Belle Vue

Before the arrival of the railway, Keswick was a small rural community and most of the town centre was still open countryside. The map below by James Clarke shows Keswick in 1787.

Keswick View stands on land once known as Robley Field, owned until July 1854 by Elizabeth Atkinson (nee Jackson). Elizabeth was the grand-daughter of the Rev. Isaac Robley, vicar of St John’s in the Vale in the late eighteenth century, and the widow of a local wool merchant, William Dunglison, and also of the local postmaster, James Atkinson.

Robley Field was inherited by Elizabeth’s eldest son, Professor Robley Dunglison MD, a world-renowned physician. Robley Dunglison had emigrated to the United States in 1824 as professor in the newly-formed Department of Medicine at the University of Virginia. He was appointed personal physician to US President Thomas Jefferson and was present at Jefferson’s deathbed in 1826. Dunglison later treated US presidents Jackson, Madison and Monroe.

By now a Philadelphia resident, Dunglison decided to sell his inherited Keswick property. Robley Field was sold at auction on 18th August 1854. At the time, the old ‘Lake Road’ went straight from the town centre across Crow Park. The road in front of Keswick View was known as ‘Little Hills Lane’, while the side road towards the lake was known as ‘Derwent Street’.

‘Robley Dunglison MD’ by E.C.Bruce (1848)
Bellevue House was built between 1861 and 1864 for a jeweller and watchmaker called Anthony Furnace. Furnace had a small adjacent workshop (now occupied by the Norwegian Shop). Following the arrival of the railway in January 1865, Keswick grew rapidly and Bellevue House found itself at the heart of the new town centre.

By 1871, Bellevue House was occupied by John and Deborah Youdale and their family. The Youdale family continued to live in the property until John's death in 1898, initially as tenants and later, from 1884, as owners. John Youdale was a painter/decorator as was his namesake son, John.

Bellevue House was bought in October 1898 by William & Ann White. The 1901 Census describes Ann as running a boarding house, while her husband was a rural postman. In 1906 “White’s Belle-Vue Boarding House” was advertised in a “Penny Guide Book to Keswick and its Vicinity” (see picture). Before long, Bellevue House became known simply as “Belle Vue”.

In 1920, the then-widowed Ann White sold the property to the local station master, Thomas Allinson, who in turn sold the property in two lots in 1922: the main property to Charles Mayson, a member of a well-known Keswick family, and much of the rear plot, now owned by Keswick Motors, to the younger John Youdale, who had a wooden paint workshop on the site. Charles Mayson was described variously as a boarding house proprietor, ironmonger, gas-fitter and plumber. By the mid-1930s, as well as operating as a boarding house, Belle Vue also housed a confectioner’s shop, which later reverted to an ironmonger’s.

During the Second World War, Youdale’s wooden paint shop to the rear was transformed into the local headquarters of the Air Training Corps (ATC). Part of this land reverted back to Belle Vue in 1947, providing the current rear access to the car-park. Belle Vue continued in the same family for a total of 61 years, mainly as an ironmonger’s and boarding house. During this period it was first operated by Charles Mayson and then by his daughter and son-in-law, Katherine and Robert Stallwood.
Belle Vue used to overlook a rural scene of allotments to the rear. The aerial photo below was taken in the late 1940s, well before Keswick’s Central Car Park was created in the 1960s. Looking towards the rear of Belle Vue, you can see the roof of George Fisher’s store at the mid-right of the photo and the large rectangular Alhambra cinema at the top centre. The adjacent corner site was the old Lake Hotel’s motor coach park, overshadowed by a large tree. Previously, this had been the terminus for the horse-drawn trips round the lake in ‘four-in-hand’ coaches. The Lake Hotel was later converted into the ‘Four in Hand’ pub (now ‘The Wainwright’), retail units and apartments. There were mature trees on the site of the garage workshop and a now-demolished outbuilding in Belle Vue’s garden. Also of interest in the photo are the old Sunday School hall next door, in what is now a beer garden, and the previously-mentioned ATC hut/paint workshop.
The photo above shows Lake Road in an old postcard printed during the 1950s, before Keswick Motors garage was built. It looks towards the gable end of Belle Vue (Keswick View) with the old Lake Hotel in the right foreground. The hotel operated its own coach company. Its fleet of coaches are parked opposite, with advertised excursions to Blackpool, Morecambe, Dumfries and Edinburgh. There is a small shop awning outside Belle Vue, with a white van parked outside.

Belle Vue was acquired by Mike Ryder in 1983 and he converted the boarding house into three holiday apartments, operated by Lexie Ryder. The photo on the right shows Belle Vue in the late 1980s. The ground floor premises were occupied by Mike Ryder’s own insurance business. These were later known as ‘Border Counties Insurance Services’ (see below).
Mike Ryder retired in 2003 and the shop premises then reopened as the ‘Toy Chest’, operated by Tim Blundell. Lexie Ryder continued to operate Belle Vue holiday apartments until 2007 (see left).

In June 2007, Gail & Andrew Newton acquired the whole property. Recognising the need to update the holiday apartments and to reflect modern tastes, Gail and Andrew renamed the holiday apartments ‘Keswick View’.

After over 140 years, the whole property needed urgent attention and was closed for refurbishment during the winter of 2007/8. All three apartments were redesigned and modernised to meet 21st century standards. Structural problems were fixed, including a new roof, and shared amenities improved, including the entrance hall, car park and laundry/drying room.

Keswick View reopened for guests in May 2008, continuing the tradition of welcoming guests to stay in the heart of Keswick.

In the final view on the right (2015), the Toy Chest has updated its branding and paintwork and Keswick View had some cosmetic changes.