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PENNANT



The Garnett Memorial, Backwell

THE LOCAL HISTORY JOURNAL OF
**BACKWELL, NAILSEA, TICKENHAM
AND WRAXALL**

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News from the Society

Projects

reports from the Editor

Farm Project

This requires to be reactivated. A fair amount of work has been done but we now need to decide where this is to go and what conclusions can be drawn from it.

Local Government Records

As many members are aware the library has for a considerable time held some of the archives of the Nailsea Town Council. Need for space by the library service and the need to ensure the safety and preservation of the documents has led to discussions regarding the transfer of the archive to Somerset R.O.

The Society has mixed feelings but cannot dispute that the documents will be safer in Taunton. This means of course that access will be more difficult for those interested in carrying out research.

We have therefore decided that copies of the Poor rate registers shall be taken prior to removal. This has been done on a selective basis taking roughly one register every five years which will give the basis for initial research in Nailsea. This can of course be followed up by a visit to Taunton where I am sure the staff at SRO will be only too pleased to help (see "Ask the Archivist" which follows). The next step will be to transfer the data to a computer. George Knox is looking into this but we do have a need for more help in putting records on computer where they are more easily available to all. This also saves wear and tear on the original records.

Files of Parish and Town Council correspondence will be examined prior to dispatch and brief notes taken of the more important items that are noticed. From this an index will be established which will be published in a future edition of Pennant and a copy lodged at Taunton.

Ask The Archivist

Archive Services in North Somerset

THE SOMERSET RECORD OFFICE AT TAUNTON IS HOME TO A WIDE AND VARIED RANGE OF ARCHIVES RELATING TO THE HISTORIC COUNTY OF SOMERSET. Staff at the office work to collect, preserve and make accessible this rich archival heritage to members of the public, in a service that remains free of charge. The 5 miles of shelving in the strongrooms hold a variety of historical sources, including local government records, such as the archives of manors, poor law unions, district councils and Somerset county Council; public institutions, including hospitals, prisons and schools, ecclesiastical records relating to the diocese of bath and Wells and its constituent parishes, as well as non-conformist sects, including Quaker, Methodist and Baptist Archives; and the records of many private businesses, families and individuals, including solicitor's papers, estate records, and many personal letters and diaries.

In order to make the services offered at Taunton more accessible to residents of North Somerset, a new archive service has been up and running since February 1997. On most Thursdays in 1997, an archivist is available in a North Somerset library to offer advice on all types of historical research, provide information on the holdings of the record office, and, where possible, to produce on prior request original documents from the Taunton strongrooms for study in the North. During these sessions it is possible to consult the most up-to-date microfiche copy of the Record Office place, surname, subject and manorial indexes to gain an indication of office holdings for any area of research.

The archives of the Nailsea area illustrate the wealth of material held by the Somerset Record Office. The office holds parish collections for Backwell, Nailsea, Tickenham and Wraxall, all of which contain registers that date from the sixteenth century. A recent addition to the Wraxall parish collection consisted of a variety of church records, including tithe accounts, school records, and a list of residents at the time of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, the centenary of which is celebrated this year. Methodist, Independent and Quaker non-conformists in Nailsea are documented in the records of local chapels and in the diocesan collection. Records relating to the ownership and usage of land in the area also abound, for instance land transactions in Tickenham are recorded in the papers of the Elton family of Clevedon Court, whilst evidence relating to land in Backwell manor exist in the Light family papers. Archival material for the region can be discovered in a range of other local collections, as well as in the deposits

of public authorities, including Bedminster Poor law Union, the Court of the County Quarter sessions, and the diocese of Bath and Wells.

An archivist will be available between 11am and 3-30pm at Weston-Super-Mare on the first and third Thursdays of every month, Nailsea on every second Thursday, and at various other local libraries on the fourth Thursday, including Clevedon on 26th June and 25th September. We hope you are able to make use of the North Somerset Archive Service. If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact the Record Office on (01823) 278805.

The Nailsea *Detached C Flight* of 1446 (Clevedon) Squadron ATC

Len Elverd who now lives in Backwell but whose parents ran a shop beside the village green in Nailsea told me that he was a member of the detached flight. I hope to have a longer chat with him to find out more.

The flight met in a big building adjacent to the Ring o' Bells. The cadets went to several camps and flew occasionally. Len thinks that the planes used were Dakotas. Can anyone else comment on those far away days?

2467 Squadron History

by Peter Wright

I am indebted to Mr R J Parke the Admin. Officer for the HQ Somerset Wing Air Training Corps for the following information.

2467 (NW Somerset) Squadron was formed on 6th June 1967. 30 years on a celebration is due!

2467 was formed in Long Ashton at the Army Cadet Force Hut in Keedwell Hill with Flt Lt R W J Davies as its first CO.

WO J M Gray and WO A E Robinson with CI D R G Reeves were the staff appointments at the commencement.

The Committee Chairman was Wg. Cdr H Quittenden and later in 1967 Mr R.H. Ball and Sqn. Ldr. J. W. Wood were appointed.

In 1970 (29th April) a detached flight was started at Portishead; this became a squadron in its own right on 16th Dec 1971.

2467 moved to its own HQ in Church House Long Ashton sometime before Nov 1969.

On 1st November 1970 Flt Lt K B Hill assumed command of 2467 and with effect from 5th March 1973 the squadron moved into its current HQ in Greenfield Crescent Nailsea.

Prior to this it had been in temporary quarters in the Army Cadet Force hut in Whitesfield Road.

With effect from 1st September 1983 Flt Lt Skinner took over command from Flt Lt Hill.

He was followed by Flt Lt J H MacDonald from 1st November 1984 and Flt Lt Tate from 28th July 1986.

Flt Lt Haggio the current CO joined the squadron as a CI on 1st September 1987 when authority was given to "recruit girls". She became a WO in 1988 subsequently taking a commission.

She assumed command of 2467 Squadron in 1991.

There are several long serving members of staff and also cadets still living in and around Nailsea so hopefully this item will be continued at a later date.

From Vestry to Second Tier

by Peter Weaver BEM

for many years Clerk to Nailsea Town Council

The story of the transition of Parish "local government" from the Vestry to the present Parish or Town Council is too long to be attempted in this submission.

It is however just as important to our communities as the comparatively recent and well known attempts by central government to "rationalize" the principal authorities. The recent abolition of the County authority in Avon in favour of

four "Unitary Authorities" has surely raised the Parish/Town Council from the officially unrecognised third position to the second tier.

Local Councils [a town council is a parish council by another name] celebrated their centenary in 1994 and we were reminded of the Local Government Act of 1894 which created Parish Councils and the "transfer of certain powers of vestry and other authorities to parish council".

Prior to that time the affairs of the communities had been the subject of discussion, and presumably resolution, at meetings of the inhabitants under the roof and guidance of the Church, hence the name The Vestry.

Charles Arnold-Baker in "Local Council Administration" suggests that meetings of inhabitants in expanding populations had an inherent disadvantage; they become unwieldy and inefficient. In some cases a "committee", called "a Select Vestry" was formed in an attempt to improve the situation but these were not popular and were said to be undemocratic. It is also evident that the Methodist revival and the objection to civil matters being dealt with by the established church lead to discontent. The Act of 1894 and the creation of our Parish Councils separated the civil from ecclesiastical functions of the Vestry. It was expected that there would be considerable opposition to this and initially there was some protest from the educated and wealthy who had previously been influential in the community. This apparently did not last very long and the Parish Council fell into undeserved obscurity from which, in some cases, it is still suffering.

The Councils, being statutory local authorities, are subject to countless Acts of Parliament which define their "Duties" and "Powers" At this time the duties are relatively few in number and are mainly concerned with the procedure for calling, holding and the conduct of meetings.

The most frequently quoted other duty is the requirement for the Council to consider the provision of Allotments if it is of the opinion that there is a need.

If the "duties" are few the "Powers" of the Council are extensive. However a Council can only act if that action is supported by legislation so much of the Clerk's time is taken up with ensuring that the Council is acting within the law. Fortunately, however, Sec 137 of the LG. Act 1972 permits a Council to spend up to a specified sum [at this time £3.50 per elector per year] on

anything of benefit to the community which it is not empowered to do under other legislation. All this may change if a Bill under consideration becomes law and the Councils are given "the Power of General Competence".

In theory they will be able to do anything!!!

The change in the status and power of the Vestry's successor authorities would surely astound our forefathers. The opportunities for our Local Councils, based on distinct communities, to play a greater part in our lives is enormous.

Perhaps we should take a greater interest in their activities.

New Publications

Bryan Button presented the Society with the text of an article and a copy of the 1891 census.

This proved to be too large for use in Pennant. We hope to publish the whole book in the near future.

We will use a method similar to the Parochial School Attendance Register but as we go to press we understand that to reproduce the whole of the Census will infringe Crown Copyright.

A feature of Bryan Button's book which I found of particular interest was the revelation that so many people were born over 20 miles from Backwell.

Editor's note - Not wishing to find myself at odds with the Crown we will probably produce the book with the names acting as an index to the Census.

Land Yeo

Keith Gardner has information to supplement that published in "Mills on the Land Yeo" and 'Further Discoveries'. We hope to publish Keith's information later in 1997.

Stone Walls

Just before this edition went to print Phil Barclay showed me some work he had done in noting where there are stone walls in the neighbourhood. This seems to be an important objective as readers will have seen the large number of walls that are being vandalised or in some places falling into disrepair.

Brockley Academy

The query in the last edition of Pennant about Brockley Academy caused several members to point out that the answer is given in Jim Pullan's book Brockley and Chelvey. This you will remember was one of our earlier publications which we hope soon to republish. *Clifford Kortright* told me that he remembers that he saw names carved into the wooden beams.

The following is an extract from Jim Pullan's book

"10. BROCKLEY ACADEMY

In January 1808 it was reported in the *Gentlemen's Magazine* (Vol. LXXVII, Pt.1) that a hoard of 274 silver coins had been found four feet below the surface by workman digging the foundations of a new school 'at Chelvey'. The hoard was in 'a stone bottle' and were said to be 'of Julius Caesar'. Nearby was 'a large black urn full of bones and ashes'.

The find was said not to be surprising' as Chelvey is only two miles from, Rectunum, an old Roman station'. However, no site of this name is known to present day archaeologists and the only Roman sites within two or three miles of Chelvey (the Roman villa at Wraxall and the Temple at Henley Wood) are recent discoveries. The important Roman Station at Gatcombe is nearly four miles away and it is unlikely that anything was known of that site in 1808.

A further difficulty over this report is that the school referred to was not at Chelvey but at Brockley, although it was the Rector of Chelvey, the Reverend W. Shaw, who built the school in 1808. It was called Brockley Academy and a handbill that advertised the opening of the new school showed an excellent etching of the building and grounds that enables us to identify it as the present Brockley Elm Farm, now used as a private residence. The main building has not changed externally and an outhouse shown in the etching is still there.

Behind the house is a two storey building still known as 'the school room'; and some of the boys initials can still be seen cut into the cross beams supporting the upper floor. Nearby is a former fives court built on to an end of a buttressed barn. Under the encroaching ivy are scattered nails that once held the plaster that gave a smooth surface for the game.

The school was advertised in the Bristol Mirror in 1827 and again when a new headmaster was appointed in 1841, but it came to an end in the eighteen-sixties, and for many years the building was used as a farmhouse.

The finding of the hoard of Roman coins on the site of the school in 1808 is, of course , a sure indication of the presence in this area of some kind of human activity in Roman times, but no other clues has been found to show where any Roman building may have stood. No coins or pottery sherds have been reported from the grounds around the building and there is no surface indication of any ancient structure here or in the neighbourhood. Pennant roofing tiles are sometimes found but these are no indication of Roman occupation for they may be of any period since pennant found locally (in Nailsea) and can still be seen on buildings standing today, for example, on an outhouse and small barn at Brockley Court Farm and on the entrance porch of Holy Trinity Church Nailsea which was repaired in 1712."

Evacuees to Nailsea

by Peter Wright

Since the publication of the second of my books about the War years I have continued to seek further information. I was fortunate to receive a letter from a Mrs Mitchell whose maiden name was Corney. Just as this edition of Pennant was going to press I received a letter from her brother George who has provided the following information. At the time of writing I have not been able to follow it up but will soon do so. Will any readers let me know if they remember the family or can tell me about those who are also named.

The following letter appeared in the local Kensington evening paper. George also wrote about 40 letters but did not receive a single reply.
Searching for local evacuees

Searching for local evacuees

I'm trying to find anyone who was evacuated to Nailsea or Backwell in Bristol from Wornington Road LCC School situated in Wornington Road North Kensington between September 1939 - 1940.

A Londoner who now lives in Nailsea and is a member of the local history society is interested in any material - photographs, especially of the school, reminiscences, teachers or friends' names - anything that would build up a picture of the kids from Kensington. My brothers and myself were put with families in Union Street. Did we play with you? Were you neighbours of ours? We would love to hear evacuees' memories. Please write Mrs Mitchell, 36 Portland Road, Ashford, Middlesex TW15 3BT

A brief sample of those remembered are Mr & Mrs Reed of Ivy Cottage Union Street and son Fred (steward at the British Legion), Albert member of the Fire Brigade and daughter Winnie who married Cyril Cridland who was a butcher at the Co-Op.

Jim Corney and his mate Eddy Farr saw a plane land on the Moors and "*a chap got out then the plane took off. He wore dark clothing and carried a large case. We thought he was a German Spy but nobody in authority believed us*".

Eddy Farr was involved in another escapade when the boys on the way to school "*captured a loose barrage balloon and tried to tie it to a tree*". When they got to school they told a teacher.

Editor's note - I hope to add more to the next edition

Family History

We continue to receive enquiries from various parts of the globe. David Chappell is fielding those via the Bristol and Avon FHS while Phyllis Horman and Phil Barclay are dealing with most of the remainder.

George and Millie Knox keep an eye on enquiries from the Weston super mare FHS and your editor has most of the postal ones which he hurriedly passes on if he can.

Our recent acquisition from Gary Boudier of a tree for the LOCK family running to more than 20 pages leads me to mention that in the Backwell 1891 census there are a number of LOCK family members mentioned.

A Backwell War Memorial

has moved to the Churchyard.

Readers may be interested to learn that the private war memorial to William Patrick Garnett has been moved to the Churchyard of Backwell Church from its original site in the grounds of Backwell Hill House on the hillside overlooking Backwell. On the base is the following inscription

“TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND IN MOST HAPPY REMEMBRANCE OF
PAT
(WILLIAM PATRICK GARNETT) AGED 22
LIEUT. 3RD ROYAL BERKS REGT AND PILOT R.F.C.
A MUCH LOVED ELDEST SON AND BROTHER KILLED ON THE WESTERN FRONT
WHILST FLYING OVER THE GERMAN LINES ON MARCH 30TH 1917.

ALSO IN HONOURED AND GRATEFUL MEMORY OF
CHRISTOPHER GEORGE BALL
AGED 26 OF THE 12TH BN GLOSTER REGT
SECOND GARDENER ON THIS PLACE
KILLED AT GUILLEMONT SEPT 3RD 1916

WILLIAM HENRY LOCK
AGED 18 OF THE 2ND WESSEX R.E.
GARDEN BOY ON THIS PLACE
KILLED AT DICKEBUSCH MARCH 5TH 1915

IN HIS LOVE AND HIS PITY HE REDEEMED THEM

Sir George Oatley (1863 - 1950) A Country connection

by John Brain

The article which follows refers to the Garnett memorial and has been provided for publication by John Brain who wrote it as a contribution for the bellringers' national journal "The Ringing World". The article is reproduced with the author's permission from The Ringing World dated 28th March 1997

This is not in the true sense of the word a ringing story, but it is refreshing sometimes to look out the tower at the wider church, and in this instance tell the tale of a chain of events which relate in a slightly different context to the eminent Bristol architect Sir George Oatley, whose involvement with Great George and the building of the University tower was so excellently chronicled in David Cawley's article in January 24th's edition of *The Ringing World*. Sir George's architectural designs left the city with a rich heritage of fine buildings earlier this century; he was also to become acquainted with our village, only seven miles from Bristol, in a totally different way, and to have an indirect effect on a project at our parish church here in Backwell completed only this week.

As in all villages until relatively recent times, there was usually "the big house" with its local squire, who if you were lucky, could also be a village benefactor. Such a man was William Garnett, who lived at Backwell Hill House with his family and a large retinue of servants - not quite "upstairs downstairs", but very much a little community away from the village, the house standing in large grounds with a commanding view over much of North Somerset and the Bristol Channel to the Welsh Coast. Back in the 18th century it was the home of J. R. Lucas, one of the owners of the nearby famous Nailsea Glassworks.

William proved a generous benefactor in the upkeep of Backwell church, as well as endowing it with a fine banner and processional cross, both still in use. The family sat in their own pew in the Rodney chapel, opposite to where I sat as a choirboy. At our day school Mr Garnett also paid for free dental treatment for the children for many years; how we dreaded the schoolmaster's Friday rollcall for that week's intake, and the long walk to the surgery, but in an age before the National Health Service, free treatment was greatly appreciated by a none too well off and largely agricultural community.

Prior to the 1914 war Mr Garnett had decided on major rebuilding work to the front of the house; Sir George was appointed architect, became a family friend,

and as so often in those circles, his daughter became engaged to William's eldest son Patrick.

Down in the village another William, William Lott, worked as a builder and undertaker, as well as being a member of the local band on the six bells as they were then, although much of his ringing took place before the turn of the century when, as the rules of 1902 put it "in the event of a ringer being unable or not willing to ring, the next in order will be invited to fill his place". William was a skilled man in the building trade, self taught, producing and building to his own designs and drawings, and he, and his workmen, were regularly employed by Mr Garnett at Backwell Hill House. Here he became acquainted with Oatley, and then became a friend, as their mutual respect for each other's capabilities grew.

William Lott's ringing tradition passed from father to son via his uncle, who was also a builder in the village, and young Jim's ringing career lasted from the Great War until a couple of years ago. Perhaps his greater claim to fame has been his chiming skills, dating back to the same era, and still a feature of the tower, although these days only on the first Sunday evening of the month.

February 4th was Jim's 95th birthday, and having lived in retirement in the same house all his life he still retains many memories of far gone village life, including the family's association with Oatley. We sat in the kitchen, and Jim related the occasion when Mr Garnett asked Sir George to design a couple of workmen's cottages for the estate. His reaction was to come to the house, and in that very room and in his plain speaking approach to tell Jim's father that he was used to building cottages to a grander design - country cottages were for country builders, so it was to William's specifications and on his advice that the plans were drawn up and the houses built. Only last year those plans were brought to light and now take pride of place in the home of the present owner of the property.

The horrors of the Great War spared few families, and Patrick Garnett's marriage to Sir George's daughter was short lived. As a young man of 22, as a member of the Royal Flying Corps, he was killed over enemy lines on the Western Front on 30th March 1917.

The loss of his eldest son affected his father deeply, and he commissioned a beautiful almost life size figure of Christ on the Cross which was erected prominently on heathland just north of the house, to commemorate both

Patrick, and two young gardeners from his estate who had also given their lives in the conflict.

The years passed by, the family grew up and left, new owners came and went, the heathland became a forestry plantation, and the Calvary almost forgotten, its position known only to a few of us in the village who knew of its whereabouts.

It would probably have remained that way, a forgotten relic to be demolished by a bulldozer when the timber crop was eventually harvested, had not our rector, Patrick Blake (now retired) come across a letter on an old file from Lady Anstey, Patrick Garnett's youngest sister, who lived in Southwell, enquiring about the possibility of saving the Crucifix, and as part of our village history, re-erecting it in the churchyard. Co-incidentally the churchyard was in need of a new area to be set aside for the interment of cremated remains, and the vision was born to make the Calvary a focal point of the scheme. Patrick Blake's initiative and drive was to prove decisive.

I will not bore reader's with how the seemingly impossible task was translated from vision into reality, especially the physical removal of an 11 foot monument set in a stone base from a sloping woodland with no road access, let alone the extensive consultations and Faculty preparation needed. Was it just coincidence that our Church Architect who devised the scheme was Sir George Oatley's last pupil back in 1947?

7th February 1997 saw some of us involved in the project, churchwardens past and present, church architect Alan Rome, Laurence Tindall the fine art restorer, and Anthony Garnett from the family watch the lorry driver, with infinite skill, position and lower the Crucifix into its plinth, a perfect fit, and a beautiful work of art to grace its new setting. Dedication of the project will, we hope, be on Easter day, 30th March (1997), 80 years to the day when Patrick Garnett gave his life for his country. I'm sure both Sir George Oatley and William Garnett would have approved.

Planning for Future Events

At the latest meeting of the Committee due note was taken of the approaching end / beginning of the millennium. It seems obvious that the choice of the time for the celebration will be the night of 31/12/1999 - 1/1/2000 rather than the more correct one year later.

How should the Society celebrate? Suggestions to the Editor as soon as possible please.

If you have read this far have you noticed a difference in this Pennant from earlier editions?