

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



Wanted! the names of these men from the 3rd Platoon, 6 Coy, 7th Bn
Somerset Home Guard 1944 (see page 27)



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Cross Currents

by John Brain

Looking back on old census returns in search of family movements invariably arouses your curiosity when the eye catches the entry of a place of birth some distance from the majority of names in the parish records; the reasons don't concern you directly, but each migration tells its own story, and each in its own way adds a little insight into the families who came to live and work in our area, in this case in the late 1800s.

My grandfather, William James Brain, first came to Chelvey in 1888 from the family home in Bitton, just a stonethrow over the Somerset boundary in Gloucestershire. Documentary evidence traces them back as far as the marriage of William Brain to Grace Berret at Bitton on June 15th 1695, and over the next 200 years their descendants' life style seemed reasonably secure, with the ownership of extensive farming land and mining properties in the area.

That is a story in itself, but we are concerned only with my grandfather, one of a family of eight children, and for whom farming had little appeal - his interest lay in all things mechanical, and following his marriage in Bath in 1876 he first worked at one of the local collieries as a "stationary engine driver" before obtaining a post with the Bristol engineering firm of Bush and de Soyers, in Cheese Lane. The firm eventually changed to Sheldon Bush, the famous lead shot manufacturers, with its well known local landmark, the shot tower, in Redcliffe Street.

The story now moves to Chelvey, where Bristol Waterworks were developing new wells at their pumping station, requiring of course the machinery to operate them. Who should be contracted to perform the engine fitting in 1888 but Bush and de Soyers, William Brain must have been seconded to assist, and perhaps impressed the Company, as the next thing we find is his appointment, on October 21st 1888, at the age of 32, as an engine driver at Chelvey, at a wage of 28/- shillings a week, plus 4/- rail and lodging allowance. He duly took up residence in the grounds at Chelvey Cottage with his wife and four young children, and lived there until his death on February 25th 1931.

William's job was always secure, but he began to look ahead towards the employment prospects for his two sons when they left the village school, almost certainly at 14. In nearby West Town was a bakery run by Asaph Viner and his family, in these days 'The Old Dairy', the corner house at the bottom and on the Weston side of Hillside Road. According to records of nearby West Town House, who were its owners, Jacob Hayman was a baker on the premises back in 1776, so the business was old established even in the late 19th century. These were the days of the renowned Backwell Harvest Homes, attended by hundreds of people from both inside and outside the parish, and the balance sheet for expenses up to 1893 would invariably include "Viner for bread and cake as per bill" running to several pounds. From 1894 the name changed to Brain, so William, described in Kelly's Directory of Somerset simply as "Shopkeeper" had become the new owner of the bakery, and continued to supply Harvest Home bread until the tradition lapsed in 1904.

Whilst Asaph Viner left Backwell for Bristol and prospered, opening shops in Marlborough St. and two others in St Phillips, William Brain was also looking for new premises as his two sons, Arthur and Herbert (my father), had by then reached their 20s, and were by now maturing as young bakers in their own right.

A little farther down the road were the two local pubs, the Rising Sun and the New Inn, and it was on land owned by the licensee of the Rising Sun, William Rendell, that William bought and had built, following an agreement on 29th September 1900, just under 100 years ago, what was to be for the next 47 years West Town Bakery - A & H Brain (Props) until their retirement on November 1st 1947.

(Readers can read their story in the article "The Country Baker" published in Pennant No 4 in 1993.).

It was always a disappointment that I never knew my grandfather, being scarcely 3 when he died. No photographs exist, but Clifford Kortright, from Wraxall, who in his younger days lived at Four Gables on the way to West End, knew him quite well. Clifford was a frequent visitor to the pumping station in his boyhood, and paints a picture of an industrious man, having by now acquired considerable engineering skills, wearing an old sailor hat and small steel glasses, an inveterate snuff taker, for ever working in the fitting

shop, turning his hand to whatever piece of machinery needed repair, or adapting and making new parts when needed - very much a man of his time.

As in every bit of research there are always gaps. William Brain was fully employed at Chelvey Waterworks, so who managed the bakery at Hillside Road initially? More to the point, his wages in 1900 were only 32/- a week, wholly inadequate to have accumulated the capital to build the substantial house and outbuildings at the new bakery. We know his wife worked in the shop in the early days, but had a poor nose for business, and it is rumoured that the new premises were financed by one of her rich relatives, who used to come to stay from time to time during my boyhood in the 1930s. There was also a tenuous connection to the site, perhaps coincidental, in that the 1891 census shows not only Rendell and his wife at The Rising Sun, but also Samuel Clarke and Daniel Downs of London, wellsinkers, lodging there, almost certainly working on the continuing new installations at Chelvey - interesting to muse on.

This then is a story of my grandfather's arrival here and his aspirations for his two sons - you could well call it a mixture of bread and water. Perhaps I should really have entitled this account "Cross Currants"!

Strays - Information received
Axbridge Union Workhouse 1891
Inmate
Sarah Payne Wid 87
General Servant Born SOM Nailsea.

COAL STRIKE AND RIOTS IN NAILSEA Part 3

by Phyllis Horman from Newspaper Cuttings. Text edited and abridged by Peter Wright.

Part 1 dealt with the background to the strikes and to events leading up to the disturbances in Nailsea. Part 2 with the appearance before magistrates of the ringleaders. In this the final outcome is considered.

THE DISTURBANCES AT NAILSEA.

ADJOURNED EXAMINATION OF THE PRISONERS.

Since the examination of the prisoners on Tuesday week last, and their release on bail there have been no fresh disturbances at Nailsea, but the colliers still continue out on strike. There was again a large attendance of them and their wives and sisters at the Union on Monday last, but their behaviour was orderly in the extreme. The sitting Magistrates on the latter occasion were Sir A.H. Elton and Col. Burrowes. The prisoners, George Noble, William Masters, Edward Broom, George Windsor and Charles Pullen having answered to their names, Mr. Edlin expressed a wish that the depositions taken at the last examination should be read over, and that of William Wookey was accordingly done so by Mr. Chadwick magistrates clerk.

A discussion followed the reading, as Mr. Edlin stated that in his notes of the deposition he found that Wookey had stated that he saw neither of the prisoners at his house, which important part of the evidence had been omitted by Mr. Chadwick. However, as neither of the Magistrates nor Mr. Abbot, attorney for the prosecution, could find any such statements in their notes, Mr. Edlin, gave way, though we may mention that on reference to our reporter's notes of the proceedings, we ascertained that he (Mr. Edlin) was perfectly correct in his assertion. This point having been disposed of, and a second opinion having taken place as to the propriety of evidence elicited in cross-examination appearing in the written deposition of a witness, Mr. Nash expressed a wish to further examine his first witness, William Wookey, but after a discussion between the Magistrates and the Counsel on both sides, Sir Arthur Elton stated that the bench could not allow of any further examination by Counsel of the previous witnesses, but would reserve to themselves the right of recalling them if they should wish.

Mr. Nash then called Samuel Davis, landlord of the Royal Oak, Nailsea, who deposed that he knew the house occupied by William Wookey; it was situated on the road leading to the glass-works; there was a garden in front of it, about 15 or 20 yards in length. Mr. Edlin I have no question to ask the witness.

Mr. Nash stated that what he had elicited from the last witness were the questions he meant to have put to Wookey, if he had been allowed to examine him. He should then have ascertained from the other witnesses if the mob they described as acting riotously, and amongst whom were the prisoners, were in Wookey's garden or not; because, if they had been, it was evident they were unlawfully assembled in a place where they had no right; and it was not necessary that these particular persons should have committed any act of violence, if they were assembled together with other persons who were acting riotously. All he should have wished to ask the former witnesses was, whether the mob was in the garden of Wookey's house, or in the road.

Mr. Edlin said he must object to the course his Learned Friend had taken. It would be in the recollection of the bench that when the case was remanded last week, Mr. Nash stated that on the prisoners being again brought up, he should be in a position to offer further evidence, whereas it now appeared that that remand had been taken in order that his Learned Friend might have an opportunity of examining the same witnesses further.

Sir A. Elton remarked the Magistrates were now waiting to hear fresh witnesses. They had reserved to themselves the right of recalling the previous ones, and further examining them if they should think fit.

Mr. Nash said he had no further witnesses, but he would submit that the remand had not been taken for the purpose described by his Learned Friend. He (Mr. Nash) did not ask for the remand because he thought there was no case against any of the prisoners, but because he considered the case against two of them was rather slight.

Sir A.H. Elton stated that the Magistrates would retire to look over the depositions, and further examine the witnesses if thought fit.

Mr. Edlin said as the case for the prosecution was closed, he had now the privilege of of addressing the Bench on behalf of the prisoners; but before he

did so, he should like to know whether the Magistrates intended further to examine any of the witnesses, as in that case he should wish to have the opportunity of addressing them on the case as a whole. After a short consultation between the Magistrates, Sir A.H. Elton said they did not intend to examine the witnesses further.

Mr. Edlin then addressed the Bench for the defence. He remarked that in common with everybody else, he must regret that any outrage should have taken place, and he should feel it to be his duty to say nothing that might aggravate the present disputes, but rather to suggest a course which might be the means of healing them, and of bringing the masters and the men into the same amicable relations as they were formerly. The question for the Bench to decide was whether the prisoners were the parties who assaulted Wookey or not, and he must object to the law as laid down by his Learned Friend namely, that the mere being present at a riotous proceeding of this sort constituted a criminal offence. For a person to become liable, it was not sufficient that he should be present, but he must commit some overt act of violence. The Learned Counsel then proceeded to dissect the evidence adduced against the prisoners, arguing, as he did on the previous occasion, that there was positively nothing against four of the prisoners, and that the other one, Charles Pullen, could only be convicted of a common assault against Samuel Harvey. He remarked that it appeared from the evidence that the real ringleaders were not before the Court, and he thought the ends of justice would be fully answered if the Magistrates were to require the prisoners to enter into the proper recognizances to preserve the peace, and if that course were adopted, the present unhappy differences between the masters and the men would be arranged with much greater facility than if any steps were taken to bring those men before a jury of their countrymen, by whom they would inevitably be acquitted. Then the Magistrates retired to consider their decision, and returned after an absence of about twenty minutes. Sir A. Elton stated that the bench had given the matter mature consideration, and they thought the ends of justice would be sufficiently secured by their convicting the prisoner Charles Pullen, so far as the assault was concerned, of the complaint against him. They should convict him and fine him the penalty of £5 or, in default, two months imprisonment. With regard to Windsor and Broome, they should bind them over, together with Pullen, to keep the peace towards her Majesty's subjects for a year. The other two prisoners, Noble and Masters, were discharged. Sir Arthur concluded by some remarks on what would be the conduct of the Magistrates in event of any further disturbances,

and by observing that the more violence the men used the less likely the masters would be to give in. It was the desire of the Magistrates that the masters and men should speedily come to some peaceful arrangement. Mr. Edlin subsequently endeavoured to procure a mitigation of the fine imposed on Pullen, but without success. Pullen, Broome and Windsor succeeded in procuring two sureties of £20 each for their good behaviour for a twelvemonth, and the Magistrates consented to grant Pullen a fortnight to pay his fine.

THE COLLIERS RIOT AT NAILSEA.

We have seen, with very great regret, the outbreak of the Nailsea colliers. For some time past the conduct of those hardy men has struck us with admiration, and we were beginning to think the old unruly spirit which they have so often exhibited in times gone by, was giving way before the general advance of civilisation, amongst the most ignorant even of the working classes. The rioting the other day has partly dispelled these illusions, but still the violence committed was not, after all, of any alarming extent, considering that these men who spend their lives in the bowels of the earth, possess in some measure the strong passions and simplicity of sailors, or any other body of men who do not mingle much with the different classes of the population.

With respect to the strike itself, we must say that we do not think the proprietors have all the justice on their side, neither do we think that the arguments put forth on their behalf always hold water. It is not our purpose to enter into this particular dispute, however, but to express our sense of the anarchy which must exist in the organisation of labour, to allow of such senseless contests as these between masters and men, contests which entail an absolute loss upon the community, as well as upon the contending parties. We can only liken it, in fact, to the stupid method of disputing a right of way, which is now being put in force at Boyce's buildings. Victory in either case leaves behind a sense of injustice, and especially in the case of the working man, as he naturally supposes that the law favours the heavy pocket. It is the interest of capital, nay, it is the bounden duty to find out some means of preventing this last appeal to the power of endurance, in the struggle between master and man. Every strike adds to the latent stock of dislike which has long been growing up between employer and employed. It is this funded grudge which all wise men should endeavour to lighten, as far as lies in their power. Political economists have long foretold that the time was coming

when a struggle would commence between numbers and wealth. The good sense of the nation, and the good feeling of the large producers and capitalists have, however, found means to conciliate much of the classing interests of these two principles.

The establishment of Schools and Saving Banks, and the general care of their workpeople, exhibited by the larger manufacturers, have done much to fill up the yawning gulph heretofore existing between them, and we verily believe that this question of wages is now the only point of difference which is the cause of black blood. In our opinion a tribunal might be formed, in which both parties would confide, to which disputes of this kind might be referred. Neither master nor man should have the right, or rather power, of dictating terms to the other. It is little less than brutal, in our opinion, for combinations of men to try which can starve the other out first. The victory obtained in such a manner is un-Christian, and cannot, and does not, prosper; and we hope that among the many philanthropic men with which our city abounds, some will be found intelligent and public spirited enough to propose some terms which will bring this unhappy dispute to an amicable settlement.

So, who were to blame, the colliers, because they were expected to take a considerable cut in their wages, or the proprietors, who seemed to have little sympathy or respect for their workmen? It is proof of the saying "Them as has, gets". It makes one think that as long as the proprietors were lining their own pockets, it was a case of "I'm alright Jack" Unfortunately, it caused a bigger uproar than may have been expected. It is such a pity that frustration is liable to cause violence, but although I cannot condone the damage done to people and property, I am on the side of the colliers and feel that the proprietors should have taken the blame for the strike and riots.

Nailsea School - 40 Years On.

By Sue Holt

Just over 40 years ago in September 1959 the first 89 pupils, the first ever "First Form" came to Nailsea Grammar School, to be welcomed by the new Headmaster, Denys John, formerly head of Devizes Grammar School. It was a brand new school, with 16.5 acres of land, built on the site of Mizzymead Farm and surrounded on almost all sides by the rolling green fields of Somerset. It was just a little way from Nailsea's village green. At that time, Nailsea was still a small village, with no street lighting, apart from one road, and a lamp on the village green outside the Queens Head. Gas had just arrived in the village, but there were no cafes, and no public conveniences. The Post Office still doubled as a drapers and the post boxes still had "GR" on them. There were 9 pubs in the village but the regulars complained that they all sold the same beer! However the expansion of Nailsea from village to town had been approved and was just beginning.

Nailsea Grammar School was designed to be the Grammar School for North West Somerset, to serve all the surrounding towns and villages - Portishead, Clevedon, Yatton, Claverham, Backwell, and of course Nailsea. The first phase of building was complete by the time that the School opened its doors, a building suitable for a 2 stream entry, of 60 children a year, so right from the start of its life plans for the school were overtaken by events as it was defacto (89 pupils) a 3 stream entry school. Accommodation included a School Hall, Dining Hall, well equipped Kitchen, Admin block with Medical room, Classroom block with Library, Chemistry Physics and Biology labs with prep rooms, Cloakrooms Lavatories and Changing rooms with hot showers, and the latest up to the minute innovation recommended by the Medical Officer to prevent the spreading of germs - Paper Towels!

The second building phase had already started when the first pupils stepped across the threshold and was to include 8 further classrooms, Gymnasium, Art room and Housecraft room. Good sports facilities were available right from the start with 2 hockey and 2 football pitches, a cricket square and 3 asphalt and 3 grass tennis courts. At the beginning there were just three and a half permanent staff (picked from 155 applicants). The History teacher also taught Geography, RE and Art, the English specialist ran the Library and taught Music, the Chemistry teacher also taught maths and took a great interest in football, French was taught by the Headmaster, and a part time PT teacher

was also on the staff. The prominent chimney (35ft) of the oil heating boiler room, soon earned the school nicknames such as "The Laundry", or the "Education Factory" or even "The Crematorium"

First year highlights were to include, the inaugural production of the Dramatic society - The Coventry Nativity Play, in which almost every member of the school had a hand, Verse speaking Competition, Form plays and a Christmas Carol Competition.

The official opening of the School took place in October 1960, the ceremony being performed by Lord Sinclair of Cleeve. By then phase two of the building was complete, the staff numbers had grown to ten full time and three part time teachers and there were 216 pupils, all in all a very good start.

School uniform was quite strict; for girls grey skirts, campanula blue jumpers, and blue and white striped blouses. For boys dark blazers with school badge on pocket, white shirts and shorts and the school tie. Both sexes wore grey socks.

The second year of the school saw the division of the School into four houses, Eagles, Falcons, Kestrels and Hawks, the first ever Athletics Sports Day (a tradition still going today) and the formation of the Parents Association, with one of its first aims - to build a Swimming Pool for the School, at an estimated cost of £1300! Fund raising was fast and furious and the first ceremonial cut of earth was made in 1961 by the manager of Bristol City Football Club, Mr Fred Ford. Further furious fund raising resulted in the first excavator dig being carried out in 1963 by TV announcer Sally Alford and the Pool was available for use in 1964. However this was not completed without incident as local newspapers reported that in May 1962 the former treasurer of the Parents Association was in court, accused of mishandling funds raised for this purpose.

So the years went gently on, with more firsts for the school, establishing long term traditions such as the School Magazine. Harvest Festival, and the Annual Speech Day, and there was no reason to imagine that things would not go on in the same steady progression, children passing their 11+, entering the school, and leaving as well rounded adults at 16 or 18. Then in June 1963, before the first pupils had even had a chance to finish their fifth year, let alone make up a brand new sixth form, plans were announced by Somerset County

Education Authority, to abolish the 11+ exam and establish "Comprehensive" education. The first two schools to adopt comprehensive roles would be Nailsea Grammar School and Gordano Secondary Modern School.

Three years later, in September 1966, the first intake of pupils arrived under the new system, to the newly renamed Nailsea School. Forms had become Tutor Groups, House names - Eagles, Falcons, Hawks and Kestrels had disappeared, and prefects were no more. Also in 1966 the schools first computer became operative, it had been built in school by staff and pupils, and was the size of a large tabletop. It was capable of simple addition and subtraction!

Thus new patterns were set for Nailsea School, and over the years innovations became new traditions and imperceptibly, terms slipped by. A major excitement in 1972 was a visit to the School by the Prime Minister The Right Honourable Edward Heath, who complemented the School thus:-

"You are to be congratulated, you obviously have a very good school here."

The next big change came in April 1976, with the appointment of a new head of Nailsea School, upon the retirement of Denys John in July. The new head, Dr Trevor White MSc Phd, qualified at Bangor University and had previously taught at Great Yarmouth, Wolverhampton, Codsall and Hazel Grove, Stockport. He was to take over a school which now contained 1,200 pupils and 70 staff.

By September 1977 pupil numbers had risen to 1313 and classroom space was at a premium, temporary classroom blocks were to arrive to alleviate the problem, these became eventually the Humanities Block (currently in the process of being replaced by a brand new building). Christmas saw the production of "No More Heroes" with a cast of 250 pupils - the biggest event seen on the school stage.

Highlights of the following years included a sponsored cycle tour in 1978 from John O'Groats to Lands End. Pupils enjoying two unexpected days holiday in January 1979 due to Union action one day, and snow the next. In 1980 pupils from the first three years took part in "In the Limelight" a BBC tv programme, directed by Leslie Judd of "Blue Peter" fame and starring David Attenborough.

The Nailsea School Charitable Trust was launched in 1981 and in 1985 the School celebrated its Silver Jubilee. 1986 saw the introduction of GCSE courses, and once again television impinged upon the life of the school in 1987, this time Granada TV interviewing four pupils for a programme on teenage views of life which was screened later that summer.

The 1990's were fairly calm years with events such as the burning down of the swimming pool and an Ofsted Inspection being taken well in the School's stride! The swimming pool was damaged beyond repair by arsonists in September 1995 and it was only by sheer chance that the Sports Hall was not seriously damaged. A few months later the site of the pool was levelled and grassed over as it was impossible to reinstate. The Ofsted Inspection took place in February 1996 and the School received a glowing report being described as a

"Very Good School".

After 22 years as Head of Nailsea School Trevor White decided that it was time to retire, and in 1998 the School put applicants for the post through three days of rigorous interviews in order to find a worthy successor. It was with great pleasure that the Governors offered the post to Robin Gildersleeve who became the School's third Head in September 1998, and thus just a year later he has the pleasure of presiding over the School's 40th anniversary.

The School currently has 1361 students and 78 teaching staff and is oversubscribed in year 7. So many changes have occurred over the last 40 years and yet the underlying ethos of the School remains the same, that all students whatever their individual talents, will reach their highest possible level of achievement. The school remembers with great affection all those pupils who have passed through its doors and hopes that they retain happy memories of their days at Nailsea. Through its pupils and staff, previous and present the School has a long history of success and achievement It looks forward to the future with confidence and hopes that the next 40 years will be as successful and as happy as the last 40.

(Ed. My first contact with Nailsea School was on the occasion of the family's move here from Hertfordshire in 1976. Late in the Summer holidays we were looking at the outside of the buildings when a gentleman emerged from one. He asked if he could help and I said we were showing my son around as he

was a new boy due to start at the school in a few days. We were surprised when the reply came " I am also starting next term, I am the new head teacher" and so we met Dr White.)

Nailsea Village Gossip (continued)

from the book of the same name by Phyllis Horman

Jan/Feb 1866

Long Ashton Petty Sessions

John Walker fined 10s. and John Staple 6s. for neglecting their horses and carts on the turnpike road.

Benjamin Weeks bound over to keep the peace for twelve months for destroying his mother's furniture and threatening her life.

Maria Brown fined 6s.-6d. for stealing two dozen stakes at Cleeve.

James Durbin fined £1-8s. including costs for keeping his beerhouse open during prohibited hours on Sun. Jan. 7th.

Robert Smart fined 10s. for letting his donkey stray on the highway.

April 1866

Long Ashton Petty Sessions

Samuel Sommerall was fined 8s. including costs for being drunk and riotous in Nailsea.

May 1866

Suicide at Nailsea

James Wabstone (*later written as Mapstone, which incidentally is the correct name*) upwards of sixty years of age hanged himself. His wife went to Wales a short while ago refusing to let him go with her. He threatened to hang himself before she came back and repeated his threat in a public house where he was drinking on Tues.

Inquest at the Butcher's Arms on James Mapstone, labourer, about seventy years, found hanging in the back kitchen of his home from a cord attached to a hook in the ceiling. He got up early on the Wed. morning and fastened his daughter's bedroom door with string, telling her not to get up until her normal time. His daughter heard a noise a little later, dressed, and managed to get the door open. She went to the back kitchen and found her father hanging. William Marshall came to her assistance and cut the man down but he was already dead. The jury returned a verdict in accordance with these facts, but there was no evidence that the deceased was insane at the time.

May 1866

Alleged Rape of a Married Woman at Nailsea

William Burridge, labourer, was charged with committing a rape on Emma Davis aged between forty and fifty years, wife of Benjamin Davis. She stated that at 7 o'clock in the morning of May 17th. she was crossing fields from where she lived to take breakfast to her husband who worked at the Glassworks. Burridge was standing by a gate in one of the fields when he caught her by the leg as she was getting over the stile, and after she had got over, he threw her down and committed the offence for which he was charged. She screamed and resisted but no-one heard her. He walked away and she continued on with her husband's breakfast. Some of the tea which was in a can was spilled, and she told her husband that she had upset it when getting over the stile. Her husband saw some dirt on her back and beat her because she would not say how it got there. She was ashamed to tell him the truth in front of the other men and was afraid because he had been to his club and he was quick tempered.

She complained to P.C. Chamberlain about the beating, but did not then say anything about the assault by William Burridge. She apparently told her husband the truth next day when he was in bed having a broken rib. She did not complain to the police until eleven days later. She was not in good health and her husband wished her to wait until he could get about again.

Benjamin Davis said his wife seemed very wild and trembling when she brought him his breakfast on the morning concerned. His suspicions were aroused when he saw the dirt on her back and the fact that the tea had been spilt. He went out and got drunk and broke a rib on the way home.

The P.C. said that when Mrs Davis complained to him of the beating by her husband, that she was afraid to go home as her husband had threatened her life if she did not go and swear a rape against some man. But she wanted to know how she could do so when no man had done anything to her. Mr Robert Wilcox said that the prisoner was a shepherd in his employ and on the morning concerned was churning at 7 am. and did not leave the premises until 8-30 am.

The magistrates considered that the evidence did not warrant a committal and that Mrs Davis was at fault in not giving evidence earlier. They dismissed the charge at the same time telling Burrige that he had had a narrow escape.

May 1866

George Parsons of Nailsea was fined 10s. and costs for trespassing on the Bristol and Exeter Railway at Clevedon. One of the officials at Nailsea station said that the defendant who was drinking on a siding, refused to move when requested.

June 1866

Thomas Barnett, George Sims, James Jakeways and Joel Owen glassblowers of Nailsea, were charged with absenting themselves from the employment of Mr Bowen glass manufacturer. They were each fined £1-8s. and ordered to return to work.

Robert Smart of Nailsea was fined 10s. and costs for allowing his donkey to stray on the highway. (*Won't this man ever learn a lesson?*)

July 1866

Assault at Nailsea

John Harvey of Nailsea was summoned by James and Mary Ann Durbin for assaults. There was also a cross-summons by Harvey against Durbin which was dismissed. They all lived in the same row of six houses and Harvey and the other occupants of the other four houses had a right to fetch water from a pump attached to Durbin's house. A few months before, Durbin purchased his house and three other adjoining and then agreed with the owner of Harvey's and the other house that the tenants stopped going along the back

of the houses to collect water, and should go along the public road at the front. This being farther, gave offence to Harvey who then became quarrelsome. On the 29th June about ten in the evening, he went to Durbin's house allegedly to get water. However, he had no reason to do this and on Durbin telling him to go to the pump, he refused to go, and Durbin pushed him out of his house. Harvey, with a heavy hammer knocked Durbin down, kicked him, breaking two of his ribs and seriously wounding him. Durbin's wife came out with a poker to help her husband, but Harvey took it away from her, knocked her down and continued the assault on Durbin until he became insensible.

Mr Carter, surgeon of West Town described the injuries to Durbin and his wife. Harvey was fined 10s. and 5s-6d. costs for the assault on Durbin, half the surgeon's fee as a witness, in all £1.0s.6d, and 2s.-6d. costs for the assault on Mrs Durbin.

Sep 1866

Sad Death of a Newsman

On Sat. evening last, William Bowden of Nailsea left home about 8-30 and went to the Royal Oak here he had one pint of beer and stayed for nearly an hour, when he left. Until mid-day Wed. he had not been seen or heard of. He was a steady man, appears to have been greatly liked and respected. He was by a trade a shoemaker but was also an agent for the newspaper. He had been complaining of pains in the head. A few days later his body was found floating in a pond belonging to and adjoining the Glassworks. It was suggested he may have committed suicide, probably in a state of delirium owing to the pains in the head. The suggestion was made by the fact that the pond was over a quarter of a mile from his home, in an opposite direction and no roadway near. His wife and family although worried by his absence, wondered if he had gone to visit relatives in either Wales or Devonshire, but had failed on enquiry to receive any news of him. As there was nothing to explain the cause of death, the coroner returned the verdict of 'Found Drowned'.

This must have annoyed one person because there was a letter sent to the editor of the newspaper as follows - 'Gentlemen, under this heading in the newspaper of this morning 'Sad death of Newsman of Nailsea' - the inquest - we have a report of the evidence taken before the coroner. It is very

unsatisfactory. I knew William Bowden well. He was a shrewd, strong minded man. He did not commit suicide, he was drowned. Was this a result of an accident or something worse? He was in the habit of carrying money about him. Twopence was found in his pocket. He was not drunk; the horse-pond was not on the way to his house but in the opposite direction. It does not appear by the report to which I refer that the body was examined by a medical officer.

This is strange. Surely it would be satisfactory to know by the evidence of a competent witness that there was no mark on the body indicating foul play. The hat of the deceased was raked out of the mud at the bottom, and therefore the policeman concluded that he fell in the pond head foremost! If there was no better evidence than that contained in the report this morning, the decision of the coroner's jury is not worth a straw. The inquiry of a coroner's jury is intended to be a protection to the public. It is expected to give satisfaction to the public mind. In this case it looks like a sham. A stranger after reading the evidence in type, might naturally conclude that the jury was summoned to decide whether the man was drowned or not. What a verdict in the middle of the nineteenth century 'Found Drowned'! The ducks in the pond knew that as well as the jury. Let us have the evidence of a medical officer in this case - it is absolutely necessary. I am, Gentlemen, your obedient servant, Falconbridge.'

I wonder who this Mr Falconbridge might be? At least he wasn't afraid to put his point of view on the verdict, and one must agree, it was very vague.

Sep 1866

Robbery at Nailsea

Frederick Caple was charged with stealing a gun belonging to Mr Davis of the Royal Oak, Nailsea. The Prisoner had been in the service of the prosecutor but left a few days previously, when he returned to fetch his clothes. After he had left, Mr Davis missed his gun from the malt room and obtained a search warrant with which P.C. Chamberlain visited the home of the prisoner's father at Wrington, and found the gun hidden under straw in an outhouse. The prisoner who had been previously convicted, was committed for trial at the next Quarter Sessions.

Dec 1866

Robert Baker a farmer of Nailsea was charged with indecently assaulting Mary Anstey his servant. The girl who is about fifteen years of age said she was in the barn picking up potatoes, on the 27th of Nov. last, when her master approached her, assaulted her indecently and tried to throw her down. Defendant was fined 5s and costs.

Bridgwater Advertiser 1833

information from Paul Mansfield

Among the items provided on a disk containing an index to the Advertiser are the following relating to the area in which the Society is interested.

25 Mar - Morgan Thomas -
glasscutter died age 58 Nailsea emp Messrs Coathupe

28 Jan - Webber Mr
Nailsea excavating well died

12 Aug - Uniacke Ellen died Tenby
dau of Norman of Backwell

7 Oct - Coathupe CT Wraxall
Birth of Daughter

21 Oct - Light John The Grove Backwell dau Mercy married at Bath

28 Oct - Maggs Mr - Backwell -
Skull fractured

28 Oct - Watts Mr of Backwell
(no other details but following is a reference to Frome rioters)

Local Study

Some thoughts for incomers and others who would like to know more
by Peter Wright

I have in my possession a small booklet "Education in the War Time Army - Local Study - prepared by The Nature Observations (Army) Joint Committee of the Royal Society and by The Directorate of Army Education, The War Office". It was purchased for the sum of 5p in a second hand bookshop.

Despite its age it has a number of suggestions that people could adapt to their own circumstances whether that be a local interest or a family interest.

The purpose of this article is to summarise some of those suggestions for the benefit of readers. While obviously not many are in the army quite a few will have been "posted" to Nailsea by their firms or will have chosen to live in Nailsea while their firms operate nearby.

I quote from the text

"...men and women in the Army ... find themselves in parts of the country that are new to them.

That being so there are two ways in which we can regard our new surroundings. One way - and perhaps too many of us are content to adopt it - is to shrug our shoulders and say that we have landed in just the sort of place we would get to, dull and uninteresting, and so different to our own familiar neighbourhood. The other is to study the new scene with interest and intelligence, to savour its novelty, to contrast and compare it with our own homes."

The booklet goes on to suggest that you build up a picture of the locality using maps street plans and postcards and states that Local Study is not just "BEING TOLD" it's "FINDING OUT" as true now as it was then.

While the local study recommended here is to develop an eye for the ground, the booklet suggests the principles of camouflage can be developed by such an eye. The eye can then be directed at the ground and the question asked as to what from the past still exists but has been camouflaged over time.

The embankment just to the south west of the Engine lane junction with St Mary's Grove and Netherton Wood Lane. Why is it there? Did you not know that at one time a rail track ran from the pit at the northern end of Engine Lane to the coal yard near Nailsea and Backwell Station.

We are told the Local Study is best done at first hand - by going and looking at things for yourself. A rather sexist statement that the "contribution that the A.T.S. can make has its own characteristic and individual value" precedes the warning that "keeping an accurate record of observations made provides much of the interest ... it is necessary to use common sense about putting on paper any details that ... might be of use to the enemy"

We have no enemies in the study of local history except possibly those with very strong ideas as to procedures to be adopted. I suggest that you ignore the words underlined above but always record accurately; do not jump to conclusions (or if you do explain how and why) AND ALWAYS RECORD YOUR SOURCE.

Bristol and Exeter Rail Road

Comments by Peter Wright

The map which appears as a centre spread to this edition was made available to the Society by Mike Tozer and the information regarding the land through which it was to pass came from the Somerset Record Office.

I understand that the timing of the proposal was around the date at which it became compulsory for full details to be deposited at the designated place.

The result here is unfortunate in that the map we have shows spurs into Nailsea, Worlebury, Burnham and Bridgwater. So far I have been unable to find evidence of the land over which the Nailsea 'spur' was to pass but the SRO has produced the details of the plan of properties that the main line would pass. It is not certain that the map and plan which has been published with the permission of the SRO (ref appears to be Q/RUP 126 Plan) relate to the same application.

The details of the owners and occupiers and the property itself are recorded under SRO ref Q/Rup 126 Bk of Reference. There is a column headed 'Lessee'

but no entries occur; it has therefore been omitted. The full heading for the first column is 'No. on Plan':-

No	Description of Property	Owner or Reputed Owner	Occupiers
1	Arable and Brook	Mary Jones	John Gray
2	Pasture and Brook	Sarah Eliza Coombs	Jas Coombs
3	Pasture	Sarah Eliza Coombs	Jas Coombs
4	Pasture	Sarah Eliza Coombs	Jas Coombs
5	Pasture and Brook	The Executors of John Withey	Geo Withy
6	Withy Bed and Brook	The Executors of John Withey	Geo Withy
7	Pasture and Brook	Josh B Sherring	Mary Wedmore
8	House Garden and Barton	Josh B Sherring	Mary Wedmore
9	Garden and Ground	Josh B Sherring	Mary Wedmore
10	Pasture and Brook	Josh B Sherring	Mary Wedmore
11	Pasture and Brook	Jno Hugh S Pigott	Elizth Wilcox
12	Pasture and Brook	Jno Hugh S Pigott	Elizth Wilcox
13	Pasture and Brook	Jno Hugh S Pigott	Elizth Wilcox
14	Alder Bed and Brook	Jno Hugh S Pigott	Elizth Wilcox
15	Arable and Brook	Jno Hugh S Pigott	Elizth Wilcox
16	Withy Bed	Jno Hugh S Pigott	Elizth Wilcox
17	Pond and Brake (sic)	Jno Hugh S Pigott	Elizth Wilcox
18	Pasture and Brook	J B Sherring	Mary Wedmore
19	Orchard	Jno Hugh S Pigott	Elizth Wilcox
20	Pond and Brake	Jno Hugh S Pigott	Elizth Wilcox
21	Pasture and Brook	Jno Hugh S Pigott	Elizth Wilcox

At the foot of the page there appears what seems to be a 'facsimile' signature

Sir John Smyth Bart. Lord of the Manor of Nailsea

“Up at the House” Memories of life on Wraxall Court Estate and in the village.
by Stan Hyde

My grandfather George Hyde was Head Gardener at the Court. The Court was always referred to as “up at the House” when mentioned in the family.

I suppose my earliest memories are from about 4 years of age. My grandmother Florence (Flo) had been in a serious car accident and had suffered a broken neck. As I remember she was in a plaster cast from her waist to just beneath her chin.

I think I was an opportune companion for her. My mother was expecting my sister and probably welcomed me being taken off her hands each morning my dad took me to his parents’ house.

At that time any spin off from being the Head Gardener’s grandson was in the availability of fruit from the gardens, not just apples and pears but the hot house produce - grapes, peaches, nectarines and sweet melons. I doubt if the fruit we had would have been of first quality - that would have been reserved for “Up at the House”. Nevertheless I was fortunate to have such exotic produce freely available at a time in the mid-1930s when the depression still hung over the country.

As I grew older, 6-8years, I was allowed to go up to the gardens by myself to find my grandfather and offer him my “help!”

I was probably more hindrance than help but I still remember the smells of the melon house, the peach house, the fumes in the stoke hole when the boilers were banked up and the musty, damp odours of the potting shed.

I am a little hazy about my grandfather’s official helpers. I think the under gardener was a Mr Shipton or Skipton but then he retired and his place was taken by a Mr Luxton. There were two other gardeners, both girls, Maude and Mary, sisters I believe, but I have no idea of their surname.

I remember that when they cleared up the Autumn leaves they used special ‘hand boards’ to scoop up about 2 cubic feet at a time into a wooden wheelbarrow which had been enlarged by means of an extension frame. When full it looked like a miniature haystack.

Other people on the estate were always referred to by surname. Sumner the Butler, Jones the Gamekeeper etc. Children were given the benefit of their Christian names, Freddy Sumner, Lenny Jones.

I have always assumed that there must have been other employees of the Davey family, a cook, chauffeur, maids but they don't appear as names in my memory.

The Home Farm was run by the Mitchells but I can't remember whether there was a Mr Mitchell senior or just Mrs Mitchell and her two sons, the brothers of Dick Mitchell the village shoemaker.

Another hazy recollection is of Miss Boosey who was a figure of some importance in the Davey family household but I am not sure whether she was Companion, Housekeeper or what. She was certainly the point of contact between lesser members of the staff and the Daveys and between Wraxall village folk and the Daveys.

My grandfather and Jones the Gamekeeper occupied a pair of stone built cottages about a quarter of a mile (400metres) to the South of the Court and reached from Ham Lane via a track of about 100 yards (90metres) in length. Jones had the East side cottage; grandfather the West. Each cottage had a long strip of vegetable garden running parallel with the entrance track.

On the piece of ground which grandfather had as a vegetable garden had previously been other cottages. By the time I knew the site one pair of cottages had been pulled down and were just a pile of rubble which I was forbidden to climb. Another pair had also been pulled down and the site cleared but the ground was poor and only supported soft fruit bushes like currants and gooseberries. There were also some beehives there but I don't remember Grandfather tending bees or collecting honey from them. However he had a hat with a veil and something like a modified blowlamp to produce smoke so he must have been looking after bees somewhere on the estate.

There were no indoor toilet facilities only a quaint "two holer" a few yards from the back door. The dual facility provided 1 large and 1 medium hole. I never did know whether they were provided for husband and wife or parent and child.

For the 'House' there was quite a sophisticated sewerage disposal system with sprinkler arms rotating over gravel/ ash beds. This system was located in the walled kitchen gardens close to the Gardeners / Gamekeepers cottages - i.e. well away from the 'House'.

I don't think that Wraxall at that time (pre 1939) had mains sewerage. The cottage where I was born, by the Boys School, and where I lived until 1939 had an outside 'loo', discretely located behind a large lilac bush / tree, emptying into a cesspit.

Similarly my other grandparents who lived in the Grove also had an outside 'loo'. They had to obtain their fresh water from a well. Lovely cold, sweet water but so inconvenient especially for older folk.

Reverting to Wraxall Court and the Davey family I don't remember meeting Mr Davey himself but I met Mrs Davey several times, once or twice when she was out walking with her little 'scottie' dog. There had been other dogs which had been buried in part of the 'Court' gardens called 'The Wilderness'. Each had its own miniature grave stone.

My grandmother was never inhibited by her plaster cast. An iron will and a blackthorn walking stick were enough for her to walk and walk and of course when I was there I walked with her.

Some walks were her favourites, for example, close to the entrance to Gran's cottage was a stile from Ham Lane onto a footpath leading to "The Warren" (presumably a rabbit warren) and then on to the Top Road. From there we could take a variety of ways to return home.

Most days we took a short trip down Ham Lane to Farmer Frank Marshalls for milk. I loved to watch the new milk trickling down over the corrugated face of the cooler. Sometimes we would pause on the way home to dig out little bits of clay from the roadside bank to be made into little marbles which we would bake in Gran's oven. Simple amusements for children in those days, no computers and software.

Another memory has just come to me, that of a game bird hanging in Gran's kitchen to get 'high'. This of course happened 'in the season' when the family went to Scotland for the shooting and would send back a hamper of birds for

the people on the estate. The hamper would be brought from Flax Bourton station by G.W.R. wagon.

Not a memory of mine as such, but something that Gran had spoken of regarding her ability to walk was that in the days before a regular 'Bus service through Wraxall she would walk to Bedminster each week to do her shopping and get a lift back home with the carrier on his cart. I believe that this was quite a usual thing for village folk to do.

That more or less completes my memories directly associated with my grandparents and Wraxall Court and leads me to some memories of life at school.

These are some more general memories of my childhood in Wraxall such as starting at the Girls School and learning how to lace shoes, knit dishcloths with giant needles and reading books in the junior library in double quick time because I could read before I started school.

I remember having to dance around the Maypole with ribbons or braid. I took part in the Jubilee celebrations of King George V and Queen Mary (1936) running in races, playing games, and having lemonade and sandwiches. This all took place on what I think was called the 'Cricket Field' (Ed should this be 1935?)

I don't know how old I would have been when I transferred to the Boys School which was next door to where I lived but two things remain vividly in my mind - the small bottles of milk placed around the coke stove to warm up on cold mornings and the dirt playground in which we made miniature roads along which to run our Dinky Toy Lorries.

Phyllis Horman tells me that the Boys' School closed in 1938 and that I would have returned to the Girls school until I left Wraxall in 1939 and 'emigrated' to Backwell.

My grandfather John Evans who died in 1903 is reputed to have been a Grenadier Guardsman who when stationed in Bath would walk to Nailsea at weekends to court the young barmaid Eliza Barnett whom he married. I am told he marched a company across Clifton Suspension Bridge when it first opened. Firstly out of step and then in step.

(Editor's note. The importance of recording memories of the past and also recording what is happening now for the future are matters that are being emphasised to Society members. Even as this journal goes to press steps are being taken by the Society to encourage more recording for the future. The above excellent example of what can be achieved has been slightly edited and added to by the editor.

Many years ago some records of the Davey family were deposited with N&DLHS. They have since been passed to Somerset Record Office for safekeeping. Inter alia there are photographs of shoots, game books and an inventory of the Court. One photograph appears to show Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister at the outbreak of war, with the family.)

An Introduction to “Wraxall Boys’ School Logbooks”

by Phyllis Horman

(Editor’s Note - Phyllis Horman has been copying information from the Log Books which are deposited at the Somerset Record Office. She has kindly offered to let us have the information in a series of articles so that it can be made available to a wider public. The Society will publish the information in a series which starts in this edition. Here is her introduction.)

Among the many stories my mother told me about childhood days concerned my father and one of her brothers. Billy Rew and Albert Youd were great friends and apparently neither were fond of the boring job of learning lessons. When the opportunity arose, they climbed out of one of the school windows, down a pear tree growing against the outside wall and were away. I've often wondered if this was true and so decided to look through the old log books to see if anything was recorded.

The school was built in 1856 but the first book starts in 1866 and ends in 1903, the second book continues until 1938 when the school closed. The Wraxall Girls School then became mixed infants and juniors, and at the age of 11 years boys and girls went to Nailsea Senior School.

I found the books so fascinating I decided to transcribe them. The general information given is really amazing especially as the years progress, also depending who was the master at the time as some wrote more than others. Over the 82 years the names of the masters were Messrs. Came, Studdle, Colchester, Tidcombe, Brown and Haining.

One expects to find such information as the lessons given to the boys, who was punished or praised and why, and the results of examinations, but there is so much more that one could almost read a potted history of Wraxall from 1866 to 1938. It wasn't only Wraxall boys who attended the school, they also came from Nailsea (glassworkers sons in particular), Backwell, Failand, Flax Bourton and Barrow Gurney, and yet at this date I'm almost certain these villages had their own schools.

Some of the general information tells of heavy rain and snow when the boys couldn't get to school, weddings and funerals of the more moneyed people, when at least one of the masters was requested to play the church organ, the

Rector's Tithe Day (twice a year) which seemed to be classed as a half holiday at times. Ploughing matches in various villages, Flower Shows, Agricultural Shows, Harvest Thanksgivings; when these were taking place some boys were absent. At potato planting and picking up times also at haymaking, some of the older boys were absent as their help was needed. Mrs. Gibbs of Tyntesfield held a clothing club at the school in November presumably the parents contributed through the year to get new clothes for the children.

Lantern shows and other entertainments were held for the parishioners and children, and being a church school there were various services especially over the Lent to Easter period and through Advent, which the boys attended and then usually had the rest of the day as half holiday.

The Rector Mr. E.P. Vaughan and later his son Henry who became his curate and the next Rector on the death of his father, were very kind to the boys encouraging them in their lessons with prizes for the best results. Some of the teachers especially Mr. Tidcombe, would periodically take some of the older boys to Weston, Bristol and even Cardiff, while the younger ones were entertained with tea and games instead. Also the Gibbs family of Tyntesfield would entertain the boys with tea and games on the estate.

I had presumed that a small village school would only teach basic reading, writing and arithmetic, but that was not so at Wraxall anyway. As one would expect Scripture with the learning from the bible, prayer book, collects for the day and various hymns were a must, but also drawing which included maps, freehand, geometrical and model drawings, notation, grammar, history, geography and gardening also came into the curriculum.

On May 15th. 1867 the Rev. E.P. Vaughan "Sent a quantity of flower roots to be divided amongst those boys who have school gardens". They also learned poetry and singing and over the years when various people of note visited the school, the boys sang to them and all seemed very impressed. On most Fridays for many years, the Rev. E.P. Vaughan took the first and second classes for scripture.

It is sad to read the entry of June 21st. 1867 "This school has sustained a great loss by the death of its excellent master, Mr. Came", but on reading the Wraxall burials Mr. Came had died in the September of 1866 aged 41 years, and the previous February a little son had died only one year old.

There were times when some of the boys were punished for being late, being absent without leave, stone throwing and sometimes, though not very often, for fighting and for playing in the road instead of the playground. Two or three of my Rew's were sent home to get their boots cleaned!

Something which really interested me was the entry of November 5th. 1867 "School very much unsettled in consequence of repeated processions of images locally called "Popes" ".

The following year November 5th. 1868 "Boys very much excited about the "Popes" ", and again November 5th. 1869 "School very disturbed by the "Popes" parading the village. Gave the first and second classes a short lesson on the Gunpowder Plot" ". In 1870, November 5th. wasn't mentioned, maybe it wasn't a school day. In time the "Popes" must have either died out or the master had got so used to it that it wasn't worth the time or ink to comment on it.

I've never heard about the "Popes" before, but it is obviously about Guy Fawkes night.

I Was only Trying to Help!

by David Chappell

(Editor's note - Several members of the Society have assisted people with family history enquiries and while so doing have encountered some eccentricities. When David told me this story I asked him to let me have the details to share with other readers. I have had other enquiries since the last issue and summarise them after David's story.)

Mrs H.'s father in law was a minister whom she thought had had connections with Tickenham. So she rang Weston Library, who noted her enquiry and rang Nailsea Library who rang the Secretary of the Nailsea and District Local History Society who said

"Tickenham? Try David Chappell"

So Nailsea Library rang me.

I found that the couple had apparently retired from Suffolk to Tickenham, died there and were buried there in 1939 and 1940.

I confirmed to Weston Library that I had found the grave.

"Stand by" *said they*.

An hour later Mrs H rang me and I told her the details I had.

"Are you the Churchwarden?" *said she*.

"No" *I replied* "more of an odd job man. Can I help you more - would you like a photo of the grave?"

"No" *she said* "and I am not telling you my phone number because I am ex-directory; nor my address". And she rang off.

The next day our minister got hold of me.

"I have had a phone call" *he said* "what are you doing getting the parish a bad name?"

I explained the situation.

By then a little appeased back she came that evening, and I told her I had also found the house the couple had lived in during his retirement.

"I knew most of that" *she said* "but thank you anyway."

And that was the last I heard of her, apparently a satisfied customer.

Armed now with an unwanted photo of the grave, I thought that Suffolk FHS might like such a stray*.

In my note I mentioned that my gazetteer had the village in Norfolk.

"That's right" *they said* "there has been a boundary change, so we can't be of assistance to you".

And I was only trying to help!

**(Ed. for those readers not 'into family history' a stray is an individual from one county who takes it upon himself to cause trouble for his/her descendants by 'popping up' in another county usually to die. There is no doubt that many of our ancestors were most careless in the way they ordered their lives and deaths.)*

Family History

by Peter Wright

The last three months have been fairly busy what with dealing with my own family history and also the histories of many individuals that have a 'local' in their family several generations ago. I have had enquiries about the "Jakeways" and the "Stokes" and have written many letters.

Some time ago I gave some assistance to Gail Durbin a descendant of that local family. David Chappell, one of our members who wrote the article that appears elsewhere in the journal, was able to provide much more assistance. For that help he has been sent a copy of a booklet that Gail Durbin has produced.

The Family History of Gail Elizabeth Scott Durbin.

Volume 1:

The Ancestors and Descendants of
Arthur Edwin Durbin 1879 - 1922

Covers all known descendants of the DURBIN family of Nailsea Somerset and Torquay Devon; and includes the Shepstone family of Nailsea, Somerset; the Sanders and the Salter family of Feniton Devon; and the Baker family of Payhembury Devon

David Chappell has passed it on to me for the Society's archives. In view of Gail's comment that "I would be pleased to hear from anyone who can add to or correct any part of this text or who thinks they may be related" I have

taken the opportunity to insert in the columns of this journal some of the queries that she has raised.

Q1. (*from p26*) Is William Durbin labourer (*b 28 Dec 1794 in Nailsea and died 18 May 1836 and who married Mary b c1794 d after 1837*) the son Daniel and Sarah?

At the time that children of this marriage were being baptised there was another couple William (a collier) and Mary whose children were also being baptised.

Q2. (*from p92*) William Durbin b 17 June 1827 m (3) Sarah Highman nee Bustin HT 1864. Where were they living in 1871? Possibly in Yatton?

It seems that he married (1) Hester before 1845 who was born about 1828 and who died 22 April 1849 at Nailsea aged 21. Who was this Hester and where did they marry?

His second marriage was to Hannah Maria Sanders on 29th April 1851 at HT Nailsea. She dies abt December 1863 in the Bedminster District.

Among other items of correspondence I have had letters from several evacuees who spent time in Wraxall, Tickenham and Backwell. This followed the repeat of the Hart Davis on History series on BBC TV in which I appeared with several who had told me their story. I hope shortly to gather together all the items relating to the war and publish them in the journal.

A Collier's Reward

by Bryan Button

(Editor - Bryan has supplied a very dark photocopy of an old document which I hope Adroit will be able to render suitable to illustrate this article. If this proves possible the illustration will appear elsewhere while the text is incorporated below, in order to increase clarity and to assist with layout " marks have been replaced with the relevant text and the 'd' for pence added as has '0' where no pence are shown. Careful examination of the original has been undertaken but some entries are still difficult to understand. Expert comment will be welcomed and if sent to the editor will be included in a later edition)

Many Somerset families, like mine, emigrated to Monmouthshire in the nineteenth century. Mine went to Pwlldu, a small village at the top of the Blorenge Mountain above Abergavenny. Here my grandfather, John Button, was born.

John became a collier and in 1899 moved across the mountains to New Tredegar, where a new colliery was offering better conditions and, presumably, better wages. Here the seams of coal were, I believe, wider.

I have recently discovered the rates of pay he received, in the document, (*referred to above*) which has survived in his home until recently.

I was delighted to discover that one of the colliers signing the pay agreement was one of my great-grandfathers - who had moved from Publow to South Wales.

It is difficult to estimate accurately the amount of money in 1899 compared with today, but the wages certainly do not seem generous. In addition, this is 'piece work' so the physically weaker colliers would have been hard pressed to receive as high a wage as their fellows. Looking more locally at this, Nailsea colliers must have had a hard life, with narrow coal seams and possibly lower wages.

The list is headed

LIST OF STANDARD PRICES
TO BE PAID AT
THE EAST ELLIOT COLLIERY
NEW TREDEGAR
Lower Four Foot Seam

and is signed at the foot by four individuals on behalf of the workers and by the Manager on behalf of the Company.

Signed for Workmen	Signed for Company
EVAN Thomas (Miners' Agent)	N. Phillips
George Gauntlett, Collier	Manager
William Scammells, Collier	
Colin Luffman, Collier	

24th July 1899

DESCRIPTION OF WORK	RATES	
CUTTING COAL	Small Stone near top of Top Coal to be filled out. No deductions to be made on account of this	1/5d per ton
TIMBERING		2d per ton
MIDDLE CLOD	10 inches thick ¼ d per Ton 11 inches thick ½ d per Ton 12 inches thick ¾ d per Ton 13 inches thick 1 d per Ton And one farthing per inch per ton for every inch above 13 inches	
TOP CLOD	4 inches thick ¼ d per Ton 6 inches thick ½ d per Ton 8 inches thick 1 d per Ton 10 inches thick 1 ½ d per Ton 12 inches thick 2 d per Ton And one farthing per inch per ton for every inch above one foot The above CLOD SCALE to apply to ALL WORKING PLACES	
Laying Road in Nottinghams		2d per yard
	When a curve takes the place of a parting, this 3 yards shall be paid at 4d per yard because it dispenses with a parting	
HEADINGS	Narrow Headings	4/10 per yard
	Heading Cutting Faces	2/9d per yard
	Wide Winning Headings	5/6d per yard
	Working Double Turn	1/0d per yard extra

Add 1/0d per yard extra per each extra shift

Double Timber 6ft. 6in. in headings	(sic) >>>	1/8. per pair 70
Double Timber 9Ft in headings		2/0d per pai
Flats		9d each
Cutting Rib (Single) in reopening places, or where ordered by Manager		1/7d per yard
Waste Walling one side (when ordered)		6d per yard
Waste Walling both sides (when ordered)		1/0d per yard
Colliers Working Day Work		3/7d per day
Colliers Working as Hauliers		4/1d per day
Loading and Unloading Rubbish		7 ½ per tram
Unloading Rubbish		3 ½ per tram

A Pair of Timber for every 3 Posts (Road) (where ordered behind tram)
One cog allowed for Cutting 2 Cogs (when ordered)

DAY MEN

Timbering by Day		4/6d per turn
Timbering By Night		4/9d per turn
Assistant Timberman		2/10 per turn d
Labourers		2/8d per turn
Banksmen		3/5d per turn
	Tippers, Screeners, Trimmers	3/0d per turn
	Attending Small Coal	3/0d per turn
	Riders	3/5d per turn
	Hauliers 3/0d Dooring 6d	3/6d per turn
	Roadmen	3/6d per turn
	Laying Partings	2/0d each
Raising Old Partings	Cutting and Filling in Rails Instead	1/6d each
	Laying Nottingham Roads	2d per yard
	Full percentage to be paid on above items	

Nailsea Village News

compiled by Phyllis Horman

(Editor's Note - Earlier in this edition reference has been made to the Durbin family. It seems appropriate to add here some information available in the Society's book "Nailsea Village News" which is currently on special offer at half its original price)

Firstly extracts about the Durbin family

1850 As Drunk as a Pig

Nailsea July 19th.

A singular incident has occurred here this week. By some mischance a pig belonging to Mr Wm Durbin, got into the cider cellar, the door of which was left open, and having gnawed the bung out of the hogshead he got thoroughly intoxicated upon the contents.

When Mrs Durbin went into the cellar she found that the cider was nearly up to her knees. Piggy reeled out and lay outside the door without sense or motion, for a space of twenty four hours. The cider, of course, was completely spoiled.

June 1850

Two sad accidents occur in one week.

Samuel Durbin had his collar bone and ribs broken when a quantity of coal fell on him. He was so severely injured he was not expected to recover.

David Martin was killed by accidently falling down the shaft of a coal pit at Youngwood new coal works. He was a Cornish miner and left a wife and four children in Cornwall.

Other extracts include

1855 Constable Wanted

An active and experienced man is wanted to serve the office of Paid Constable for the parish of Nailsea, for the ensuing year. Salary £52. Testimonials to be sent to the Rev F Brown, Nailsea Rectory, not later than Saturday 10th March, and candidates for the office will be required to appear before the vestry on March 12th at 11.00 o'clock. A married man will be preferred.

At a vestry meeting held on Monday, Josiah Matthews from Herefordshire was appointed paid constable of this parish at a salary of £52 per annum. We hope this officer will be the means of preventing the recurrence of robberies which of late have been so frequent in this neighbourhood. *By 1856 two policemen were employed.*

1855 The welcome news of the capture of Sebastopol reached this place late on Monday evening but was not generally credited until more authentic accounts arrived the following morning. The inhabitants received the information with great rejoicing and the church bells were rung throughout the day. Our correspondent informs us that this parish has contributed more than the compliment of heroes to this war, nearly all of whom have unfortunately been either killed or wounded.

1855 Nailsea

On Monday night last the peaceable inhabitants of this village were subjected to much annoyance from some lawless gang.

A large stone was thrown through one of the bedroom windows of the Rectory House, the residence of the Rev F Brown.

Two servants were sleeping in the room at the time, but fortunately escaped injury, although the missile went completely through the blind inside the window. The windows of several other houses were broken, a quantity of broccoli stolen and the flowers in several of the cottager's gardens wantonly destroyed.

This is so like modern times. Vandalism to other people's property is not something new. I often wonder how the vandals themselves would react if others ganged up against them and did damage to their property? They would be very much up in arms!

1855 Shirehampton - Melancholy Accident - Two Brothers Drowned

A melancholy sensation has been produced throughout this village and its neighbourhood in consequence of two youths named Edwin Lester and Robert Lester who stood in the near relationship of brothers, being found drowned in an exhausted clay pit at Broad Pill.

It appears that the unfortunate young men were employed at the Pottery where there are several pits from which clay has been dug, and which have by the land drainage become filled to a considerable depth with water.

The precise circumstances under which the unfortunate youths, who were aged 19 and 17 years respectively, were drowned are unknown, as there were no witnesses of their untimely end.

The body of the elder when found was divested of shoes and stockings, and many persons surmise that at the time of the fatal occurrence, he was in the act of washing his feet, and that in stooping forward with this object he overbalanced himself and fell in, and that the younger brother was drowned in an attempt to save him.

An inquest has since been held on the bodies, and a verdict of Accidental Death returned. The young men were natives of Nailsea, where they have been buried.

December 1856 Fatal Accident

On Wednesday night last the night policeman stationed on the Bristol and Exeter Railway, near the Nailsea station, was killed by the up midnight train.

It is supposed that he hurriedly left his watch on hearing the approach of the train, and in attempting to display the signal, was knocked down and killed on the spot. He has left a wife and four children.

A Trip to Wembley

an extract from Jack Hart's memoirs.

(Editor - As Bristol City prepare to visit Wembley and the problems that have arisen over the Stadium's demolition this brief extract from one of the Society's first publications seems appropriate. Obviously getting a ticket was a little easier!)

My stepfather, Mr Fred Williams, with the help of some of his customers, organised an annual outing to London to see the Cup Final at Wembley. A club was formed, to be known as 'The Queen's Head Sports Club. Members paid a weekly subscription, half of which went to the Wembley outing and half to a weekly football sweepstake.

At first we went by train from Nailsea Station, starting at 6.30am. Plenty of cases of beer and minerals were loaded, together with boxes of sandwiches prepared overnight by my mother and helpers. We arrived at Paddington about 10am. Everyone then went their separate ways, eventually arriving at Wembley Stadium to see the match. All who wanted a ticket had one, in fact I have known times when there were spare ones although the party was over 100.

One year we tried to sell some when we got to Wembley at the correct price (two shillings and sixpence) for standing room, but everyone we approached thought they were counterfeit. To get rid of them Fred Williams put them into the hands of a policeman telling him they were genuine. Another time when tickets became scarce, some of our party were without tickets and sat by one of the big doors leading into the Stadium prepared to listen rather than look. Presently a man came out and told them to nip in quick and put something on the table inside the doors in appreciation. They had to sit on the grass around the Stadium but of course were delighted.

On other occasions I have known the party leaving Nailsea with perhaps one in four of them without tickets. They nearly always met people who were willing to sell them a ticket and so nearly everybody saw the match after all. After the match we went back to London, had a good meal (usually at Lyons Corner House), and then spent an evening at a show, a cinema or some favoured pub, until it was time to catch our train at Paddington to arrive home about 4am.

I remember one incident that was talked about for a long time afterwards. We arrived at Nailsea Station and had nearly all got off the train when the guard, who had come along closing the doors, found some of our party still asleep. He woke them and told them to hurry and get out. Some of them had their boots off, so they got out in their stockinged feet. One man said that the two boots left behind were odd sizes and at this the guard became fed up, slammed the door, blew his whistle and on went the train.

The story ends with our friend getting off the train at Yatton, sleeping in the waiting room until daylight and then walking home in odd boots. After several outings by train we changed to motor coaches, making it a two-day outing and staying overnight at hotels in the centre of London. We would leave Nailsea in three or four large coaches, stopping at Marlborough where breakfast had been ordered.

After leaving Marlborough we made a few stops for liquid refreshment and arrived in London with time to have a meal before proceeding to Wembley. After the match we did the usual - theatre, cinema or pub - and then back to our hotel, often to find a sing-song going on. Drinks were obtainable until the early hours; despite this there were not many missing breakfast. If there were some missing we went on a wake-up tour.

One year one man was not only missing, his bed had not been slept in. Further investigation led to his discovery, asleep in a bath, fortunately dry. Many of us spent the morning in Petticoat Lane market looking for presents for wives and sweethearts and children. Some bought silk stockings, only to find when their womenfolk put them on that they went to shreds. Some bought watches - if they were lucky they had a good one and if not they had rubbish.

After dinner there was time for a stroll before boarding our coaches for home. Many were glad to relax and sleep on the coach until we arrived back at Marlborough where tea had been ordered. About 9pm we got back to the Queens Head where the womenfolk and children were waiting. Tales were told for months afterwards of the funny incidents that occurred in London.

One story I remember was when Albert Sprod was undressing in his room. He called out to his pal in the next room 'Ow he were getting on?'.
'Ow he were getting on?'

Chummy Winsor replied 'I be all right, come on in a minute'.

So Albert left his room letting his own door shut behind him. When he returned after their chat, Albert found his door locked. He called out to Chummy, who came out of his room letting his own door shut behind him. So there they both were, out in the corridor, with only their shirts on. One of our party called the duty chambermaid and, seeing her coming, the two pals ran down the corridor. Seeing the funny side of it she chased them but eventually let them into their rooms.

These outings became so popular that men from Portishead, Clevedon and Bristol joined us. In later years George Gallop of the Ring of Bells ran a similar outing.

(Editor - more extracts will be included in later editions)

New Publications

1. **"Boggie Meares and Queachy Fennes"** Drayton's description of Somerset's Marshland in 1612 is the title of Keith Gardner's latest book. It is his second study in landscape archaeology produced in conjunction with the Society. It is indeed a 'team' effort in that the author and the Society have funded it jointly. It covers an area much greater than is usual with N&DLHS publications. The area studied extends from Yatton to Uphill. This book will no doubt be one of the most important volumes issued by N&DLHS.

See also Volume 1 "Who Made the Land Yeo" by Keith S Gardner.

Both volumes are available in Nailsea shops and from the Society. Commercial enquiries are welcomed from other areas.

2. Peter Wright's **"Nailsea 1881 - A view of the Village"** will be available shortly from the Society and the usual outlets.

3. Available by about September a study by Jenny Wheeler one of our younger members

Nailsea 1828

A POOR'S RATE

made this 8th day of December 1828 for the necessary relief of the poor of the Parish of Nailsea in the County of Somerset and for the purposes as contained in the several acts of Parliament) Comprising £347:6:9 being 1/- in the £.

By
Jenny Wheeler