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Wraxall Court c1933



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The 'Bus to Wraxall

The following article is a slightly abridged extract from the Autumn 1999 edition of "Nonesuch" the University of Bristol Magazine. It is printed here with the permission of the University of Bristol.)

Reality was certainly harsh during the war (see Nonesuch spring 1995), and the privations continued into the '50s. Students who lived in Wraxall Court, however, shared experiences that were unique to this country house as these graduates remember

William Bennett 1949

To meet the post-war expansion in the University's student population the University rented a country house known as Wraxall Court which had been used during the war as a convalescent home for naval officers. Some of the bedrooms had been divided into cubicles to accommodate several servicemen. coverlets on the beds still bore the naval insignia, an anchor in blue thread. Early in October 1946 the first intake of undergraduates arrived.

Even though it was several miles from Bristol and residence was more costly than lodgings in Bristol, some students preferred to live there during all three undergraduate years. They valued life in the countryside, the quietness, the views across the Somerset 'levels' to the distant Quantock Hills, the apple orchards in springtime, the autumn hints of leaves on the trees behind the house itself.

There were very few street lights in the small village so we had to rely on domestic lighting or hand torches to find our way about in the darkness. However, the bright lights of the house were an attraction for the large black insects which bred in the 'levels' in spring and summer time and zoomed towards the bedrooms. Moreover, the sight and unpleasant smell of apples rotting in the yard of Coates's cider Factory on the outskirts of nearby Nailsea was enough to put at least one person off drinking cider for life.

Those early weeks were not without their particular inconveniences. there was insufficient crockery and cutlery to last a whole dinner, so half-way through we had to wash up some of what we had just used in order to finish the meal.

When we had first arrived we were told that food supplies had not been fully delivered so our first dinner was Spam and boiled runner beans followed by a plate of cornflakes. The cook had been a blacksmith in a Canadian lumber camp prior to coming to Wraxall. We learned later that his best dish was pancakes and syrup; it made a welcome change from a sweet consisting of four dried prunes on a plate! Food of course was still on coupons and not always in ample supply.

Life in spartan conditions had its compensations: long walks, sometimes over the Suspension Bridge, through Leigh Woods and Failand back to Wraxall after lectures on Saturdays, or west from Wraxall to 'Cadbury Camp' or to do some shopping in Nailsea which was a long straggling village in those days, and nothing like the dormitory suburb it has since become.

Being so far from Bristol we looked locally for entertainment. On Friday nights a group of people met in a private house to listen to classical music; they called themselves "The Wraxall Recorded Music Society"; the company, music and refreshments were very good. The local vicar would sometimes come bringing his chess board to entice anyone to play, but often we found we had more pressing studies to do or pursuits to follow! However most of the students involved themselves in the monthly discussions led by a distinguished guest who came to dinner and then talked informally in the common room. Amongst those who came were the Bishop of Bristol, Sir Philip Morris, Prof. Mott and Prof. Pugsley.

During RAG week we tried to collect money from the villagers in Wraxall and Nailsea but after the first year's experience decided to discontinue. The villagers had little knowledge of mad-cap students, so the police and warden were soon besieged with frantic 'phone calls and complaints.

A group had approached one particularly well-lit house, knocked on the door, and were confronted with the terrified cry, 'Good God, no', from a little man also dressed in unusual clothes: we had stumbled on the monthly meeting of the local Freemasons.

The undergraduates were a very mixed bunch, perhaps more so than pre-war or today: this variety enhanced the experience of each of us, especially those who had come straight from school and had little knowledge of life in general. Some were already married with families living elsewhere; some were engaged.

Several had seen active service in various areas of combat; most were anxious to get a good degree as soon as possible which would enable them to settle into a more normal life than they had known during the war years.

Not all were British: there was a Malaysian; two were from the continent of Africa; another was a socialist refugee from communist controlled Czechoslovakia who had barely escaped with his life across the frontier and had to leave behind his wife and baby daughter until such time as they managed to get out. The daughter for a while became the only female amongst the body of students. Each week until the end of the first term an ex-army sergeant used to don his uniform to go and collect his pay; he was still technically in the army.

It was difficult to get fuel for vehicles taking part in the RAG parade so on one occasion we had a wagon hitched to a farm tractor which used paraffin instead of precious petrol and drove slowly all the way into Bristol, in the Parade, and back to Wraxall.

Looking back from a distance of 50 years one wonders where all that first intake of Wraxallians are now.

Michael Griffith (BSc 1950)

I went to Bristol in October 1946 straight from war service in the Royal Navy with a view to reading Geography and becoming a teacher.

I was delighted to be told that I had a place in a new Hall of Residence called Wraxall Court. The snag was that it was eight miles from Bristol, on the road to Clevedon, but there would be a coach laid on by the University to take us to lectures in the mornings, and bring us back after laboratories in the afternoons.

I well remember waiting that first day for the coach which took us out through Long Ashton into the delightful village of Wraxall.

There was our new home, and very splendid it looked from the outside, but there was not a lot inside. We were greeted by the warden, Mr J.K. Sutherland, and were told that at first things would be pretty basic, as indeed they were.

We were a mixed bunch of about 30 students, mostly straight from school but with a 'leavening' (if that is the right word) of ex- servicemen like myself.

There were few single rooms and I found myself sharing with two young lads straight from school (George Ardley and Howard Brooks). We soon shook down and made the best of it. The main grumbles were over food as there was still rationing, and we were always hungry (George Ardley's family used to send him Cornish pasties which were much appreciated by Howard and myself). George Wignall was ex- army and was our first senior student. He got a room to himself, which was a blessing as he smoked a very smelly pipe.

I was elected senior student in my second year, and really enjoyed the social as well as the academic life. The problem was getting back to Wraxall after a dance at the Victoria Rooms or in fact any other activity after the 5.15 pm coach left. Buses did not run very late in those days, and many of us had to walk several miles in the dark either from the railway station at Nailsea or the junction where the Weston-Super-Mare 'bus left the Clevedon road.

I was entitled to a third year at Wraxall, but decided to postpone it until my education year, which was a mistake as by then the whole ethos of the place had changed. We were no longer pioneers blazing a trail in unexplored Somerset; things were civilised; we had to wear gowns for dinner.

Bernard R. Hillier (BA 1951)

Whatever my objectives as a sixth-former, unforeseen events were to lead to a fortuitous change to my plans. Instead of continuing with my education immediately after leaving school in 1945, I found to my consternation that although the war was over young men of my age were still being conscripted into military service. I spent the next two-and-a-half years as an NCO in the Intelligence Corps, which in fact helped me to come of age and accept greater responsibilities.

The prospect of an FETS grant removed any concerns regarding whether I could afford to go to university and I was only too glad to take advantage of the opportunity on offer.

During my time at Bristol a frequent topic of conversation was whether ex-service students derived more benefit from their studies than their colleagues who had gone to university straight from school. I personally felt that as far as

examination grades were concerned there was a distinct advantage in uninterrupted studies through school and university. examination grades, however are not everything. I found that three years away from formal studies provided an opportunity to take stock of myself and to decide what general direction I wished my career to take.

In the early post-war period many people, and particularly those who had fought overseas, earnestly believed that Britain should move quickly to a more just and egalitarian society. While I was still in the army I had formed the view that, keen lad as I was, I might eventually find some minor role in helping bring such a Utopia to reality in Britain. The study of Economics, I thought, would be a move in the right direction. Consequently, in the autumn of 1948 I caught the 'bus to Bristol to begin my university course in Economics.

In 1948 the University had a student body of only little above 2,000 students with relatively few women students. Social life tended to focus on the rather elegant Victoria Rooms, which housed the Student Union, and most of our classes were conducted in the even more impressive Wills Memorial Building.

Economics was not then a widely popular subject and there were only three of us taking the course known as ' Special Economics'. Most of our classes were shared with five students who were taking a joint-school course in Philosophy and Economics, and in practice we tended to regard ourselves as one eight-strong group.

The Head of the Economics Department, H.D.Dickinson, was a born academic but one who also had the gift of being able to mix on easy terms with his students. Without doubt he is the person who made the greatest impression on me in my three years at Bristol.

For the first two years of my time I lived at Wraxall Court. I had an enjoyable two years there, before moving into digs in Clifton for my finals year. Nailsea is best known to most people as the source of blue* glassware now eagerly sought after by collectors. To myself, and probably to some of my old Wraxall friends, it is better known as the location of a cider mill which kept the Nailsea pub well supplied with scrumpy.

On one occasion Wraxall Court entered a float to the RAG procession on the theme of 'state pubs'. A more memorable effort, however, was made by another group of students who staged a week-long athletic feat of some

magnitude. A stalwart in their ranks with the resounding name of 'Igot Krampad' undertook to swim across the Atlantic and to time his arrival at Bristol docks to coincide with the commencement of RAG week. Daily bulletins were posted to record his progress, e.g. 'Igot sighted swimming strongly in an easterly direction off the Azores'.

My thoughts are frequently with Bristol and the west country generally, and I was delighted when a Branch of Convocation was established in Auckland for alumni in the north island of New Zealand.

*(*Editor of Pennant - I have to correct Bernard's memory. Bristol is famed for its Blue Glass; Nailsea for its Green.)*

The editor's thanks go to the University of Bristol for allowing the article to be published in Pennant and for putting the Society in touch with the three contributors named above.

Thanks are also due to Jonathan Harlow Secretary of ALHA for bringing it to the editor's attention.

The illustration on page 3 comprising part of the article in 'Nonesuch' appears with the permission of the University of Bristol.

Wraxall Boys' School Log Books Part 2

Compiled by Phyllis Horman

After the death of Mr. Carne, Mr. Studdle became the next master and although he was not certificated as such at the time (he was classed as 4th. class, 1st. grade) he seems to have taught well and kept the boys under reasonable control. June 4th. 1867 "Attendance better, (there had been a spell of very wet weather) William Griffin struck in the head by a stone thrown by F. Reed. Cautioned the boys to abstain from such sports, and took F. Reed home for his parents to punish him" so it would seem that he wasn't one to keep using the cane as punishment.

Around this time several of the boys were absent without leave, the punishment being that they were kept in school for an extra hour but if it should happen too frequently, their names were taken off the registers, then they, or more likely their parents, would have to apply for them to be re-instated. The number of boys on the registers at this date was 57, most parents paid a few pence a week for their children's education therefore they would want to get their monies worth. For those who couldn't afford to pay, (the children were written as "pauper children") the fees were paid by the Poor Rate through the Relieving Officer.

The weather during July and August 1867 was very unsettled, and on July 25th.

"Cautioned the boys against making a mess with the water pump, forbade the boys going to the pump without leave from me." There was probably enough rainwater without adding to it!

By January 6th. 1868 Mr. Studdle was getting concerned about the latecomers, "I have not paid attention enough lately to the punctuality of the boys consequently several of the more dilatory ones are generally late, this must be stopped. I gave notice to this effect to the boys today." As if he hadn't enough problems, February 21st. "School thrown into confusion by the sudden accidental death of Mrs. Price my housekeeper this morning early."

In June and July the weather had become very hot and on July 24th. Mr. Studdle remarked "Rev. E.P. Vaughan called and gave a lesson. The school was closed today for 3 weeks for the usual Midsummer Vacation. the school

work during the past fortnight has been very unsatisfactory on account of the great heat." After the return to school there was still the problem with the boys arriving late or not at all September 21st. "Removed the names of two boys, W. Rew and A. Adams from the registers on account of the irregularity of their attendance." William Rew was my grandfather.

Mr. Studdle was determined to better himself as on December 14th. "No school, Master absent attending the Certificate Examination at St. Mark's College, Chelsea"

At the start of 1869 there were 60 names on the registers and on January 14th. "One new boy, Edward Youde." He was the youngest brother of my other grandfather John Youd, and he seems to have been a very bright lad with his lessons. As he was born in 1859 it would be presumed he had started school elsewhere, it may have been Clapton in Gordano. My cousin David Youd wrote an article about Edward in "Pennant" Vol. 1 no. 2. entitled "Edward Youd of Wraxall. Drowned off Cherbourg. 1880."

During 1869 several boys left school to start work, or because of irregular attendance their names were taken off the registers, but August 2nd. "Re-opened school. 47 names upon the registers. The school is very low just now in consequence of the loss of nearly all the Nailsea children who have left while their fathers are thrown out of work by the closing of the Glassworks", however, on August 30th. "Several of the boys from Nailsea have returned to school being paid for by the Distress Committee."

On September 29th. Mr. Studdle tendered his resignation which was accepted. December 20th. and 21st. "Master absent attending the Committee of Trinity School, Maidstone, relative to the election for a Master for that school. Mr. John Hall jr. kindly carried on the school during these two days", and on December 24th. "School closed for Xmas holidays, 1 week, boys dismissed at 3 o'clock. This day my duties as Master of Wraxall Boys school terminate. Boys presented me with a writing desk as a parting gift. Rev. E.P. Vaughan called." T. Studdle.

The first entry 1870, January 3rd. "Began school with 37 present, 62 on the register, 47 present today (which reads rather peculiarly). Unable to write in copy books for want of ink." This must be where Mr. Colchester commenced as master, and it would seem he had a lot of work before him. January 5th. "45 present. Examined 1st. and 2nd. classes in Scripture History - some

answered well - others scarcely at all, must endeavour to mend this", and the next day "44 present. Gave first two classes a lesson on the life of Solomon, and endeavoured to get answers from the boys to whom the questions were put, and with rather better success than yesterday", so he was on the right track. It must be mentioned however, that the ages of the boys ranged from infants to leaving age, 12 to 14 years, and there was only the one room in which to teach them all, with no division to separate the classes.

The weather was cold, January 18th. "Very cold - found the boys standing about during playtime - taught them the game of "Fox and Geese" to warm them." The boys were also taught Drill which they seemed to enjoy, so that too must have warmed them up ! On February 1st. two new Nailsea boys were admitted, Harry Ponsford and H. Windmill. By the 8th. "A pitched battle yesterday between D King and H. Ponsford, two Nailsea boys (in the field) - Gave a lesson today on Cain and Abel." Oh dear, was it the Nailsea boys who liked to fight? In the of February there was sickness about which was still causing a lot of absentees into April. The boy who was the paid monitor was absent as there was sickness in the house, at the annual school inspection 11 were absent through sickness. By April 8th. 13 boys were absent through sickness, others from potato planting, and on April 13th. "29 present. William Davey (paid monitor) died yesterday of fever. Resquiescat in pacem." May 2nd. to the 22nd. "School practically closed on account of Scarlet Fever. Two deaths, William Davey and Walter Jones. The visit of H.M. Inspector postponed till the 10th. June." Not a good start for the new year or the new master, and it wasn't till June 28th. that there were 50 boys present, the highest number since February.

On July 14th. came the report of a Drawing Examination. Of the 40 presentable, 18 were present, the rest being absent from Fever. Of these 5 were satisfactory, 6 proficient and 1 excellent, with a prize, this was Chas. Burge for Model Drawing. Mr. Barry's report of the school was "Both schools have suffered from an unusually severe attack of fever. A new master has not long been appointed. The discipline is good. Holy Scripture of 108 questions 71 were answered by the scholars to whom they were addressed. Catechism 26 of 51. Geography 30 of 42. Considering the circumstances very fair progress has been made in elementary subjects." E.P. Vaughan. The other school mentioned would have been the girls school.

It was a very hot and oppressive summer again. On July 22nd. "Average for the week 47. Present at all 54. No. on registers 60. School all excitement

today to see the Funeral of Mr. Gibbs son and nephew. Broke up today for Midsummer Holidays 3 weeks" I cannot remember being excited about a funeral when I was at school, in fact, if we were out with mother and a funeral procession came by, we stopped and bowed our heads until they had passed.

When the school re-opened, several of the boys had left presumably to start work, and J. and T. Malcolm (glassworkers sons) left, with their friends for Sunderland. September 2nd. William Rew was sent home again for irregularity after being cautioned, but on the 6th. he was re-admitted on a promise of attending more regularly. In October some boys were away potato picking, apple picking and helping with cider making.

November 2nd. began fires for the winter, a holiday on the 8th. on the occasion of the opening of an organ in Wraxall church, to which the master adds "Red letter day." November 10th. "Made out Government return apropos of the New Education Act (1870)", and except for the fact that Wm. Eyres was kept in to sweep as punishment for not sweeping on Saturday, ran away from school, but two days later he did his sweeping, and everything else went quite well for the rest of the month. December began with cold and wet weather, there was a half holiday on the 8th. and a day's holiday on the 9th. for the Clothing Club which was held at the school. On the 12th. "42 present. Very cold and the furnace doesn't draw well when most needed - wind up. All excitement on the 22nd. 39 present. Partial eclipse of the sun 11 to 11-38. Very well seen and great interest in by the boys - gave them some explanation of the phenomena." On the 24th. "Only 29 present, cold intense 15 degrees of frost. Average for the week 34. Broke up for the Christmas Holidays (fortnight)."

Corrections to Pennant 26

"Up at the House" Article by Stan Hyde

p23 col 2 para 1 line 6 should read "both girls, Maude and Margaret, sisters I"

p25 final paragraph re John Evans should commence "My great grandfather".

“Nailsea Village Gossip”

More from the book of the same name by Phyllis Horman

March 1867

Ann Hedges of Wraxall, fined 18s. including costs - the loaf was 2oz. short.
Richard Elverd, grocer of Nailsea, fined 18s. including costs - the loaf was 2oz. short.

April 1867

John Melborne pleaded guilty to stealing three glass tiles at Nailsea, the property of his master Mr Bowen, and was sentenced to fourteen days imprisonment.

May 1867

William Biffen of Nailsea, chemist and druggist having been judged bankrupt on the 11th. of May 1867, a public sitting for the said bankrupt to pass his last examination and make application for his discharge will be held at the said Court in Bristol on the 19th of June 1867.

Oct 1867

Mr Lippiatt a beerhouse keeper in Nailsea found George Pullen in his garden cutting cabbages. P.C. Chambers was informed and went to Pullen's lodgings between ten and eleven the same evening. Taking Pullen to the station they met Frederick Hunt and John Birch, who said he should not take Pullen. P.C. Chamberlain came to assist. Hunt and Birch then tried to rescue Pullen. P.C. Chamberlain threw Hunt to the ground. Hunt drew a pistol and deliberately aimed at Chamberlain, but fortunately the pistol didn't fire although it was loaded. The P.C. also found an open knife in Hunt's pocket.

Birch struck Chamberlain violently on the forehead and kicked him several times. P.C. Chambers was also assaulted.

The officers succeeded in taking the three men into custody. Hunt and Birch were remanded in custody until Petty Sessions a few days later and Pullen was summoned to answer the charge of theft of the cabbages. Hunt was a well known character having been convicted several times and imprisoned for six

years for felony.

At the Petty Sessions (the name Birch is now written as Burge) William Brown, Robert Smart and Sarah Thompson were also charged with assaulting P.C. Chamberlain. It appears that, when the officers got Pullen to the lock-up, a number of people were waiting there, among them the other prisoners. Hunt said 'You are not going to lock Pullen up' and the fight began. Pullen broke loose, ran away and was caught again. The gun used was rusty and on unscrewing the barrel a vice had to be used, but never the less it was loaded.

Brown, Smart and Thompson were found guilty of assaulting the constables, Brown fined 5 and costs, or in default, a month's imprisonment. Thompson and Smart 3 each or eleven days, Hunt committed for trial for intent to bodily harm. Burge (Birch) was given an otherwise good character by someone in Court, was charged with assault but was given bail, 20 himself, and two sureties of 40 each. Mr Thatcher of Nailsea became one of the sureties. At a Western Circuit in Dec. a former conviction for felony was proved on Hunt and he was sentenced to twelve years penal servitude.

The amazing thing about this case is, except that Pullen, the originator of this trouble was summoned to answer to the theft of the cabbages, nothing more is mentioned of him whether he was fined or what sentence he may have had.

July 1868

At a slaughter house in Membry's Court, Temple Street, Bristol on 11 of June, John Cann, butcher, had six calves. Cornelius Shepstone, 38, butcher (of Nailsea) helped to load them in a cart for the cattle market and he advised Cann to send only four out of the six. However, he took five and left one behind.

When Cann arrived back he found the sixth calf gone. Cann went to see Shepstone about it, he denied having it and went to several slaughter houses with Cann to look for it. Shepstone had sold it for 10s. after having asked 17s. to a Mr Harding of Butcher's Row and Cann identified it as his.

In cross examination at Court, Cann admitted that he was out on ticket of leave after serving penal servitude for killing a child. He had also been imprisoned for stealing a sheep and for threatening a constable. In cross

examination (again) Cann admitted that he and Shepstone bought the calves together at Nailsea. Shepstone said - 'It was as much mine as his'.

The jury convicted the prisoner, someone in the gallery crying out 'That's an unfair verdict', sentence four months hard labour.

Oct 1868

Long Ashton Petty Sessions

George Hodge of Nailsea was charged with negligently driving a horse and cart at Nailsea causing injury to a lady and pony. The case was withdrawn with Hodge paying 5s. to the Bristol Infirmary.

July 1869

Emily Vowles aged thirteen pleaded guilty to stealing two legs of mutton and other articles (how did she manage to conceal it?) from Mr Bryant's butcher's shop, Nailsea, and was sentenced to twenty one days imprisonment and afterwards to three years at a Reformatory.

July 1869

On Mon. evening last, at Nailsea, P.C. Chambers went to bathe at Back Cutting near the railway. One side is rather deep and as he couldn't swim he was drowned before anyone could help. Unfortunately his wife and daughter were not far away when the accident happened.

1869/70

Sheep Stealing at Tickenham

Cornelius Shepstone alias Shippy a butcher of lowest class, and Alfred Rawlings were charged with having on the 16th. July stolen or killed a sheep with intent to steal it from Mr William Dyke Green, farmer of Clevedon. Mr W D Green rented three fields at Tickenham containing twenty two sheep. Rawlings was working for him on day work.

Rawlings was sworn in and stated that on the morning in question Shippy who was working in the next field called him over for a drink of cider, and they stayed nearly all day, drinking.

Shippy said 'How would it be if we killed one of the sheep and threw it in a

ditch?’ So they went into the next field, caught one of the sheep and Shippy threw it to the ground and nearly choked it with his fingers and thumb, and before it was dead he threw it in the ditch. Then he said ‘Stick him in the water and he’ll bleed well and it will be all the better.’ The sheep was left in the water for a short while then taken out.

Shippy, who was in the next field suggested throwing it back in the water, someone whose name was believed to be White, did so. Rawlings went away and fell asleep, so he didn’t see who cut the sheep open and hung it on a tree. Shippy accused Rawlings of committing the whole offence and said that Rawlings pressed him several times to buy sheep, but he wouldn’t. Rawlings was very drunk. Prisoner was committed for trial, bail being refused.

June 1879

Dreadful Fatality at Nailsea

Yesterday morning two men named George Hills and Charles Day, engaged in sinking a well on the farm of Mr Grey, Nailsea Batch, were suffocated. It appears that the well, which had been partly sunk, had been abandoned, and the two men having undertaken to complete the job, Hills without taking the usual precautions, descended the well. He was down some time when, receiving no response to calls made, Day was lowered to find out if anything had happened. Day did not give any sign and was drawn up, when he was found to be insensible, and shortly afterwards expired. The body of Hills was recovered some time after. An inquest will be held.

Final thoughts on Nailsea Village Gossip by Phyllis Horman

My thatched cottages and quiet law-abiding countryfolk have vanished completely as far as Nailsea is concerned. The five minute chat over the gate must have lasted much longer than I thought with all these happenings. I wonder if other villages have had such an eye opener? Oh well, we all have our faults. We may covet our neighbours possessions, even his cucumbers and cabbages. We can all fly off the handle at times, though not quite so violently, we hope!

These are only a few of the cases, there are a great many more, some utterly ridiculous, some humorous and some very, very sad. However, these carefully preserved newspaper cuttings do away with one story which we have been told. allegedly, the village fights were mainly between the colliers and glassworkers, now we see it is not necessarily so, there is not one account over this period of men from these two industries fighting en masse. Maybe they have been blamed far too much, perhaps they weren’t sworn enemies after all!

The Thatcher Family (Nailsea and Newport) and their relations.

Compiled by Peter Wright from information provided by Mrs Jacqueline Clark (née Thatcher), Phyllis Horman and Eileen Johnson

(When I first came to Nailsea in 1976 and became interested in local history I found that the name of Thatcher was well known and well respected in the 'village'. It was only about a year ago that I came across a bundle of photographs in the Local History archive that related to a Thatcher family with the name and address of Mrs Jacqueline Clark. It is thanks to her kindness in supplying further information and to Phyllis Horman who had been in contact with a Thatcher descendant in Canada that I have been able to compile this article. Near the end is a list of all the 'hatches, matches and dispatches' recorded locally that Phyllis has been able to trace. Further information from readers about the family, the brewery etc would be appreciated. EDITOR)

PART 1.

"The Thatchers, the Farlers and a house called "Trostry""

by Phyllis Horman.

Previously published in Pennant No 13 what follows is an edited version:-

I was sorry to learn recently of the death in Canada of Mrs Thatcher whose father in law was Herbert Edwin and whose ancestors were the Thatchers of Nailsea who started the brewery and caused the Friendship Inn to be built. Tony, (their son) who wrote to tell me of her death, was interested in the family history. I met him he came to England recently. Tony's mother had been keen to find a house (built in Wraxall for her husband's parents) which had been named "Trostry." She had seen it many years ago but had forgotten the exact location.

Tony remarked in one of his letters "Thinking about "Trostry" my grandfather (Herbert Edwin) lived for a number of years around the turn of the century in Newport, Mon. running the other Thatcher Brewery on Mountjoy Street. I see that there is a street called Trosty in Newport not far from the Brewery and I wonder if the name originated there...." In the same letter he also said "Regarding the Farlers, we hold a photograph of John Farler who was reputedly the governor (or on his staff) of Zanzibar. He is wearing a fez and (it) was taken last century. I wonder if he was the eldest son of John Farler of Coal Pit fame. Another little mystery!"

..... I pointed out the corner of Christ Church where many Thatchers and Farlers are buried and where the brewery and water tower had been and then Heath House.

At Holy Trinity Church we found the Thatcher great grandparents grave with other members of their family buried with them. Next we went to Farlers End to see the tower of Farlers Pit. On to Rosemount now Trendlewood House where John Farler and family lived. Unfortunately this is almost impossible to see. We then went to Wraxall where Tony had found his grandfather's grave 3 years earlier and then up Tower House Lane as this seemed the most likely area to look for "Trostry" ... (It seemed likely that "Sunrise" might have been "Trostry")

PART 2.

The Thatcher family (Wales)

by Jacqueline Cecile Clark (née Thatcher)

My Early Recollections

I remember trips to Weston-super-Mare taken by paddle steamers from Newport. Staying with my grandmother Selina and her two spinster daughters at 'Montrose' Kewstoke Road. There was a lovely park, close to the house overlooking the sea with fish ponds and pleasant walks, where I was taken as a small child. The house was rather gloomy. I remember feather mattresses and the bed high off the ground. My grandmother died when I was about 6 years old. Many years later I visited WSM with my mother and husband (Aubrey Clark, an architect) and found the house quite unchanged.

The Brewery

known as **Thatchers Bristol Brewery Newport Monmouthshire** .

I remember the brewery quite well, especially the smell of beer brewing - peering into large vats of beer and nibbling malt sugar from large sacks. I believe the brewery closed in 1939 at the outbreak of war. In 1949 we visited the family home in Nailsea with my husband, my mother and sister, my father declined to come. I was pregnant with my son Timothy. We were entertained by the owner who lived with a sister or friend. She may have been a distant relative but I cannot remember her name. It would be so interesting to know if there is anyone in Nailsea who would know or recognise her from the photos. She certainly knew the Thatcher background. There was a charming dairy in the grounds. The house was dark and rambling. I remember at least

one four poster bed and in the main hall was a large organ which my father used to play in his youth.

The Family History

Tom Miles Thatcher my father was born in Weston-super-Mare and died in Tunbridge Wells in 1955 aged 73. He had two sisters Ethel and Emily. Both were spinsters who lived at home with their mother. Ethel was a musician and music teacher; Emily was an artist.

Horatio (Ray) Thatcher a younger brother who would not participate in brewery activities. He travelled and ended his days in Newquay Cornwall. He bought a schooner, turned it into a museum, lived on board and opened it to the public. He was a good story teller. I believe that he died in the late 60s.

Arthur Thatcher left England and settled in Dallas Texas. Married Peggy and had two daughters Shirley and Eileen and a son Bob. They became quite prosperous with a large town house and a summer cottage at Bella Vista. Constructed of wood and engraved on the front of the house "THATCHER."

We have a large batch of photos showing the family, their cars, swimming pool and interior views of their rooms. In one room is a photo of Peggy and a note written on the back saying that the painting on the wall in the background was painted by Arthur's sister Emily.

Their son Bob visited us in the 1930s when I was about 9 years old. I remember his visit well. He was in his early 20s, rather fat and bouncy. He dangled me over the banister rail and threatened to drop me. I remained quite calm; not the reaction he hoped to get.

The house in Newport at 3 Clifton Place I never visited. I believe that in my lifetime it was lived in by Ray (Horatio) Thatcher with wife and family my father did not approve.

Anna Françoise Colin born in France 1903 came to WSM to learn English and to teach French at a local school. She stayed with Julian Heywood at a house named Silver Craig. He was also a friend of the Thatchers. When my father Tom Miles Thatcher built a house in anticipation of marrying my mother he named it "Silver Craig." There they lived for the next 25 years. I was born in 1923 and my sister (who died in 1968) in 1926.

Their next house was a tiny cottage at Magor, near Newport, known as Wharf Cottage. My mother turned a wilderness into a beautiful garden. After a few more years they sold and settled at Wadhurst.

PART 3.

The Thatcher Family's Nailsea Relations and Heath House residents

by Phyllis Horman

It seems worthwhile to add to the family details above those who lived at Heath House about fifty to sixty years ago. At the end of this part is a list of births, marriages and burials that will assist in tying the various surnames together. I remember mainly Miss Ada Farler, she did most of the shopping (groceries) and came into Mrs Dodrell's (senior) when I worked there. Miss Ada almost always brought "Cam" the dog. He was a small terrier of some kind about as broad as he was long. On rare occasions Miss Mc Millan or Mrs Gardner would come in minus "Cam."

Heath House

The occupants were The Misses Julia, Ada, Isa, and Amy Farler, Miss Octavia McMillan and Mrs Gardner. It seems that only Miss Julia was baptised at Nailsea. Mrs Gardner was a sister of Miss McMillan

Local Registers

Christ Church Baptism

Julia Eliza dau of Thomas Warren and Julia Eliza Farler (Carrier of Bristol)
23.6.1871.

The marriage of the parents does not seem to have been in Nailsea.

Christ Church Marriage 14 Sep 1855

Charles McMillan BAC. F.A.

Woollen Draper and Tailor of Bristol (father -Duncan McMillan) married

Octavia Thatcher Spin. F.A. of Christ Church Parish (Father - Samuel Thatcher)

Christ Church Baptisms

Octavia D of Charles and Octavia McMillan Ch. Ch. Parish 21.9.1856

Marion Beatrice,

Maude Mary,

Charles Duncan Horatio,

Children of Charles and Octavia living at Keynsham 18.9.1864

Christ Church Marriage 4 Sep 1907

Thomas Dent Gardner

WID FA Solicitor of St James Dover (father Henry Thomas Gardner) and

Maude Mary McMillan Spin FA Christ Church Parish

(father Charles McMillan)

Witnesses Edgar Thatcher and Marion Beatrice McMillan

Christ Church Burials

Agnes Octavia McMillan	2y1m		3 Aug 1858
Ann Farler	85	Rosemount Nailsea	2 Mar 1867
John Farler	77	Trinity Parish	28 Feb 1870
Nathaniel Carter Farler	40	Bristol	30 Aug 1873
Octavia McMillan	43	Christ Church	27 Jun 1877
Julia Eliza Farler	47	Christ Church	13 Feb 1884
Charlotte Sarah Farler	68	Leicester Sq Clifton	29 Nov 1898
Charles Duncan Horatio McMillan	55	The Vicarage Burton Hill Malmesbury	10 May 1919
Elizabeth Carter Farler	89	Richmond Park Rd Clifton	14 Aug 1923
Mary Jane Farler	69	Chesterfield Place Clifton	5 Jan 1924
Isabel Farler	70	Nailsea	7 Jul 1942
Marion Beatrice McMillan	80	Nailsea	29 Jun 1943
Maud Mary Dent Gardner	88	Nailsea	2 Dec 1948
Ada Martha Farler	77	Nailsea	15 Jan 1952
Amy Warren Farler	75	Heath Cottage Nailsea	7 Jul 1952

Holy Trinity Baptisms and Marriages Farler - None found

PART 4.

The 1881 Census

By Peter Wright

The 1881 census shows that there were 13 persons named Thatcher living in Nailsea.

In Silver Street lived Edgar THATCHER was a Brewer employing 2 men and a boy. He was unmarried and was 36 whose place of birth had been Nailsea. He was described as head of the household. Two sisters, both born in Nailsea and unmarried lived with him. Isabel aged 39 and Emma aged 38, both described as receiving an income from the brewery.

The other family members resident there on the day of the census were Maud Mary MCMILLAN (a niece aged 21, born in Bristol who was in receipt of dividends) Isabel SHAW (a widow of 40 born in Dorchester a cousin also in receipt of dividends) Ada Martha FARLER (a niece aged 7 and born in Fishponds). As none are labelled 'Visitor' I assume that this was their regular address. Leah Jones born at Wraxall aged 19 was the domestic servant. The name THATCHER is also found in Kings Hill, Youngwood Farm, Back Lane and Goss Lane.

The Thatcher Family

In Kings Hill

lived Samuel THATCHER, a baker, aged 72 employing 1 man and a boy. Samuel Thatcher had been born in Timsbury while his wife aged 60 had been born in Nailsea. William J Thatcher who appears as 'son' is a baker's assistant. He also had been born in Nailsea . A visitor Charles Ashley, 43 married and born in Timsbury is shown.

At Youngwood Farm

George B Thatcher is shown as aged 62, a farmer of 174 acres employing three men and a boy. His mother Sarah a widow (born Nailsea, as was George B Thatcher) is aged 85 occupation is Retired Farmer.

Another Sarah Thatcher, George B.'s wife is aged 60 and was born in Mark. Also at the Farm are two other relatives; Cornelia A GRIFFIN, aged 23 and unmarried, is shown as being a niece and her occupation Dairymaid. Her place of birth is given as London Middlesex. The other relative is Ellen LUFF, a widow sister in law born Mark Somerset aged 53. She is described as 'Visitor'.

There is one boarder George W Livins Clergyman's son 46 U b Clifton and one 'Farm servant (indoors)' Albert Brimble 13 b Nailsea.

In Back Lane

at No 5 Mary M THATCHER is shown as a visitor. She was unmarried aged 28 and was born in Bourton, Somerset. The head of the house was Sarah Coombs, a retired farmer aged 78 born in Winford whose niece Sarah S Keel aged 8 born in Nimpnett, a scholar, also appears as living there. Sarah Rodgers A general domestic servant from Clapton Somerset aged 59 and unmarried also appears on the census.

In Goss Lane

James THATCHER aged 29 a Stationary Engine driver lives with his wife Mary his wife aged 30 who had been born in Cornwall. With them is their son William J Thatcher aged 1 born in Nailsea like his dad.

Fifty nine years later, early in 1939 Eileen Johnson started work for the Misses Farler at Heath Cottage and stayed there for two years. She received five shillings a week and worked from 8am to 6pm. She writes:-

IN SERVICE AT HEATH COTTAGE

By Eileen Johnson

"I remember hearing men outside the Friendship Inn saying the (second world) war had started. At the time only Miss Marie and Miss Ada were in residence but as soon as the war was declared, the rest of them came rushing home."

"I had one half day off a week and every other Sunday afternoon which had to be spent in the organ room. – Miss Marie and Miss Ada were British Israelites and their meetings were held there. Regarding the organ, it was not then in the hall as Mrs Clarke remembers. There was a dairy in the grounds and by it was another building with a room on ground level which was the organ room, and a room above which was Miss Isa's (Isabel) room full of pictures, ornaments etc. and she also used it as bedroom during the summer. There was no electricity only lamps and candles, dustpans and brushes for cleaning and I had to empty slops (from chambers under the bed) although there was a bathroom and toilet – not a pleasant job."

"The family were big eaters, cooked breakfasts, elevenses, a three course

lunch after which they went to their rooms to lie down until it was tea time about 4 o'clock, then another three course meal, dinner this time, and probably a bedtime drink, but as I left at 6pm I don't really know. Miss May Luxton (known as Ethel) was the cook with Miss Ada helping at times. Mrs Gardner was the soup maker and any bits and pieces went into the soup pot. Game birds were sent from Scotland, they were left to hang for days until there were maggots in them when they were considered "ripe" and ready for cooking. Could it have been relations of the McMillans who sent the birds."

"Mr Edgar Webber was gardener and general handyman, he also looked after the cows. Butter was made in the dairy. By the way "Cam" the dog was a border terrier."

"My mother worked at Heath Cottage probably starting when she left school about 1906. Mr Tom Vowles was the gardener and he married the lady who was the cook, she lived on the premises. At that time the Brewery was still working. Did the "New Inn" at Backwell belong to the Thatchers?"

"When Mrs Gardner came to Heath Cottage she brought her companion, Miss Garner, but there wasn't room for her and as she doesn't seem to have been buried at Christ Church or Holy Trinity it must be assumed that she didn't stay in Nailsea for the rest of her life."

Phyllis Horman says that she remembers Miss Garner going into Mr Doddrell's shop around 1943, so perhaps she returned to Dover after the war .

Family History

By Peter Wright

The Society has had a number of enquiries lately about families who used to live in the area. Mrs Sheila Baker wrote to me about the Tilley family. Her ggg grandfather was a glassblower and the family have some items made by him. He went to America and she has sent me some information about him. If anyone has any information please contact the editor as an article is planned for a later edition of Pennant.

I have written to two people researching the name "WARFIELD", one is descended from Elizabeth who was involved with the murder! on the Causeway.

Margaret Thomas Trophy

– This new trophy was awarded to Golden Valley School. Full details in the Society's newsletter which has been sent to Members with this edition of Pennant. If you are not a member why not consider joining the Society and be sure of your copy of Pennant together with the Newsletter in the future.

Julie Mansfield - North Somerset Archivist

I have just heard from Julie Mansfield that she is to make a 'career change' and will be leaving the Somerset Record Office shortly. I am using Pennant, the official journal of N&DLHS, to record the thanks of myself and the members of the Society and general public who have sought her assistance over recent years. She will sorely be missed. I am sure that we will achieve the same rapport with her replacement. We wish her success in her new career. You will read on the following pages some information about prisons that she supplied with her article "It's Criminal in Nailsea" that appeared in Pennant 25. I was unable to print it there but now seems an appropriate time to do so.

Peter Wright - Secretary/Editor/Publisher for N&DLHS

"Mollies", Sunnyside, Jacklands, Tickenham

by David Chappell

Around 1990 we went to see Miss Doris (Tasmania) Fisher, who was born in the cottage and lived there all her life until she died aged 93 on 13th December 1996. There is a small glass annex where she lived when she had TB when she was about 15.

She was the sister of Clifford Fisher who lived in the cottage in the wood opposite Ashley Olsen's greengrocer shop. They were chapel folk, and are both buried in Tickenham Churchyard.

The building in the photos is 'Mollies' a dame school which (I think) she ran when she was a young woman. You can see the roof of the trout farm in one of the photos. Also shown is the spring from which she drew her water (and allowed the trout farm to draw theirs). She occasionally suffered from the failure of the Bristol Water and Wessex Water's computers to understand how she paid for (and needed) a sewerage service when she had bought no water.

I had a look the other day and think the building has now been demolished.

Jack Hart's short emigration!

An extract from his second book. Jack and Zena were well known inhabitants of Nailsea. At one time they were 'landlords' at the Queen's Head where Jack's mother had also been in charge.

I had decided to go to Australia. Mother had two brothers and a brother-in-law out there, so she said I must please myself. I went to Clevedon, told my young lady Zena, and we agreed to get married.

We applied to the vicar of Clevedon for a special licence. It was granted. We married, and about a fortnight later we sailed on the 'Esperance Bay'.

After five weeks at sea we landed at Freemantle where one of my uncles met us and took us to his home by train. My word what a journey that was. We started from Perth on a mixed goods train and then travelled very steadily until we got to a gradient where we had to wait for another train to pull us up, very slowly. Every time it stopped or started we had that terrible bumping you can hear when goods trains are moving in sidings.

Zena was resting when one of the crashing bumps occurred. She was on the floor before she realised what was happening. We arrived at our destination in the dark. It had been raining, so it was not a very good introduction to the sunny Australia we had heard so much about.

We stayed with our relatives for a while but there was very little work in that district. Eventually I wrote to another uncle who worked in a small outback town. He replied that he thought I could find work there, so we moved. We certainly had more luck there, as I found some seasonal work like harvesting, fruit picking and clearing land. There was always some work going on and if you were known as a willing worker there was always a job.

My trouble was that I could not get acclimatised. If I was working, I had to give it up because I would find my finger tips becoming festered and I would become terribly weak. I did find a suitable job at a vineyard where they grew currants, raisins, sultanas and muscatel grapes. I had to leave Zena with my relatives as the vineyard was miles from anywhere, with virgin bush country all around.

Zena was alright as she had a little shop where she sold soft drinks, tobacco

and cigarettes. She also did some haircutting. I was soon busy, as I started at the vineyard just as the grapes had ripened. We had to cut the stems with secateurs, filling buckets which were picked up by our boss, Bill Light. He had a horse and cart and when the cart was full, he took the grapes to where they were to be dried. They were spread on wire mesh trays in a roofed, open sided shed. After the first tray was loaded, a block was put on each corner for the next tray to rest on and so eventually a pile was built and left to dry. After drying they were bagged for export.

I had to finish that job because I had a badly poisoned hand. Eventually I was told that my trouble was caused by my blood not thinning down to the very hot climate. The doctors said I was a temperate climate man and that I should return home to England or go to New Zealand. We booked a passage and sailed for home on the P&O liner 'Orontes'.