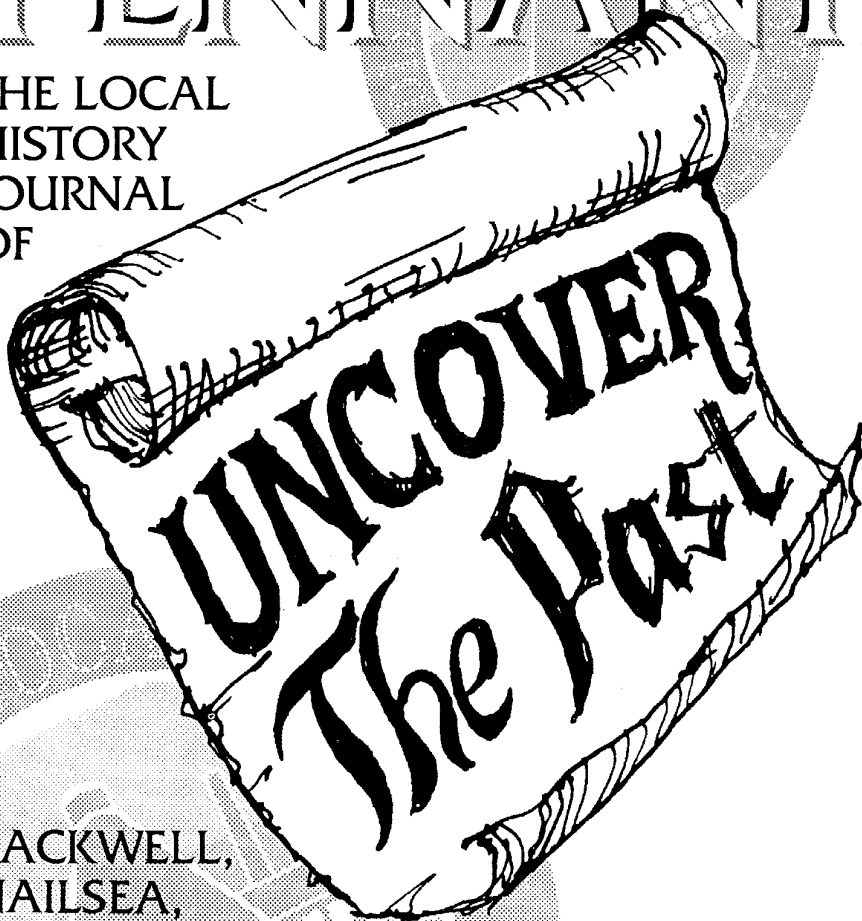


Volume 1 No 3

ISSN 0966-5951

# PENNANT

THE LOCAL  
HISTORY  
JOURNAL  
OF



BACKWELL,  
NAILSEA,  
TICKENHAM  
AND  
WRAXALL

WINTER 1993

£1.60

Previously published by Nailsea & District Local History Society during 1993.

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# The Uses of a Cow

by Norma Knight

Set in the wall surrounding Backwell Church is a stone with an unusual inscription. The oldest memorial stone in the churchyard, it reads, "Here lyeth the body of Edmond Hiscox which was buried the 25 day of March 1591 which gave a cow to the use of the pore of Backwell the hire to be distributed yerely on Good Friday for ever". The lettering is, on the whole, quite clear except for the word 'cow' which is badly worn and has caused some speculation. However, reference to the parish register for that period revealed the following entry which expands a little the information on the stone. "Edmond Hiscox was buried the 25 of March an. dm. 1591 who hath given a cow for the relief of the pore within the parish of Backwell for ever to be lett forth by the parson and vicar to the most advantage of the said pore and the profitt of the hire of the said cow to be distributed amongst the said pore yerelie by the discretion of the said parson and vicar for the tyme being every yere uppon good fryday for ever".(1)

The Hiscox name appears frequently in the early register, but it is not clear whether there was one family or several of that name. An Edmond was baptised on 29 November 1564 and married Elizabeth Sheperd on 21 November 1586. If this is the same Edmond then he was scarcely 27 when he died.

The bequest of a cow was not uncommon. Throughout the Middle Ages men and women left a sum of money or the income from land or animals to be used towards the saying of masses for their souls and those of their families and others. The wealthy founded and built chantry chapels, the remains of which can still be seen in many cathedrals and parish churches. A priest would be employed to say mass in the chapel every day and especially on feast days. The less wealthy might endow a light to

burn before the Holy Rood (Cross) or the image of Our Lady or one of the saints. Alternatively an income might be provided for an obit which was an annual memorial mass. There was just such an obit "founded within the parish church" (of Backwell), listed in 1548. "One annual rent to be levied and receyved of the issues and revenues of the landes and ten[emen]tes of... Trystram there...vj d.(2)

In the sixteenth century the Reformation brought about radical changes. By 1550 chantries and obits had been abolished, lights were illegal and images had, for the most part, been removed. It was no longer possible for men and women to salve their consciences or show repentance by making gifts to the church. Instead they turned to giving help to the poor, who were no longer receiving assistance from the traditional source, the monasteries, since they had been abolished by Henry VIII. Wealthy benefactors founded almshouses, while the less wealthy provided a source of income that could be distributed among the poor at certain times of the year.

Edmond Hiscox gave a cow to provide an income for ever, the cow's offspring presumably being intended to continue the benefaction. Sadly, however, there are no further references to the charity in the surviving documents.

The commemorative stone can be found set in the wall a little to the right of the church gates as you enter. Do look at it the next time you are in Churchtown, Backwell, so that at least the memory of a charitable gesture will survive.

## References

1. S.R.O., D/P/back 2/1/1a.
2. S.R.S., ii. 87 (Somerset Chantries and Free Chapels; Guilds, Fraternities, Lamps, Lights and Obits.).

# **The Chapel at Birdcombe Court, Wraxall**

**by Peter Sapsed**

On Sunday 31st August 1992 a Holy Communion or Mass was celebrated in the chapel of Birdcombe Court and on this occasion Judith and Adrian Codrington were present representing the Society. The owners of Birdcombe Court, Peter and Caroline Sapsed, have made a practice of saying Mass in their Chapel on or about 1st September in each year because the chapel probably owes its origins to a document dated 1st September 1331.

In the Register of Ralph of Shrewsbury, Bishop of Bath and Wells from 1329 to 1363 is the following entry (the original is in Latin and is in the Somerset Record Office in Taunton):

On the first day of the month of September, the year aforesaid(1331) at Banwell the Lord (Bishop) granted a special licence to John at More of Bredecumb that he might set up a wooden table within his house and having put an altar stone on it have a mass celebrated there once a year without prejudice to the rights of the parish church of Wraxall or of any others".

This entry does not of course give permission for a chapel and there is no evidence as to how long there has been a chapel in the house. However 1331 is close to the date of the central hall and screens passage generally dated to the end of the thirteenth century, and either then , or perhaps at the time the house was much enlarged in the fifteenth century when it was acquired by Sir Edmond Gorges, it is very possible that a chapel was incorporated.

The present chapel is very small, seating only five people, although a few more are able to participate in worship from seats outside the stone arch which forms its entrance. The altar is a carved stone block apparently of considerable age, but without consecration crosses. On the wall opposite the altar a previous owner has added the coats of arms of the four local dioceses - Bath & Wells, Bristol, Gloucester and Exeter: the present owners have restored the beamed ceiling and inserted a stained glass panel. The chapel is situated on the ground floor and a few feet from its entrance is a trap door in the floor which gives access to a stone chamber sometimes referred to as a priest hole. This chamber has no obvious purpose and since there is an air vent within the wall above it is just possible that this was its purpose, but then perhaps it has some connection with the old stories of a tunnel from Birdcombe to Wraxall Church. W.L.Rew in his book "Memories of Wraxall 1917-1935" referred to this passage but he would almost certainly agree that it is an unlikely story.

We know that the present chapel was in existence before 1964 but we have no earlier references other than the novel "The Stolen Man" by Mrs Coulson Kernahan set in Victorian times but published in 1916. Much of her story was located in The Tower House, as Birdcombe was called in the nineteenth century, and at the Glassworks of Nailsea. Her Tower House had a chapel and probably the real house did too. It would be nice to think that a chapel has not only existed but has been used continuously at Birdcombe since 1331.

# Henry Burgum of Bristol and Tickenham

## A Postscript by Phyllis Horman

In part 2 of David Chappell's article about Henry Burgum he mentions Hales Farm and Mog's Ground.

In the will of Sir Edmond Gorges of Wraxall, dated April 1511 is the following (*which I will write in modern day wording to make easier reading*):-

Item "I bequeath to my son William Gorges the manor of Birdcombe with the appurtenances lying in Wraxall, Nailsea, Tickenham, Portishead."

Item "I bequeath to my son William Gorges the Hole House and the Mogg House with all the appurtenances lying within the parish of Tickenham to be had (?) and hold the said manor of Birdcombe with all the appurtenances lying in Wraxall Nailsea, Tickenham and Portishead and also the Hole House and the Mogg House with all their appurtenances lying in Tickenham parish to the aforesaid William Gorges and to his heirs in fee forever. And if it so be the said William Gorges die without heirs of his body lawfully begotten that then the said manor of Birdcombe with all the appurtenances and the Hole House and the Mogg House return again to the right heirs of me the aforesaid Sir Edmond Gorges."

The Hole House and the Mogg House are reputed to have been on or near the site of present day Hales Farm. It is interesting to note the words or names HALE (or HOLE?) and MOGG (or MOG?) are in the present day names. There could be another explanation of Hales Farm; was there ever a family called Hale living there?

By the way a Hole House was where a game not unlike bowls was played and a Mogg House was "a place for idling in". (an old fashioned sports complex! according to Hallswell)

David Chappell tells me that in talking to Mrs McEwen-Smith she informed him that there is still a flat area where Mummers may have performed.

Other references that preceded the will mentioned above were

Theobald Gorges  
1469/70 Message called Hole House or Hale House  
Tickenham

and

1470 the manor of Hale house and Tickenham was held by  
Agnes Wake and Edmund Gorges



## Family History

In the last issue I mentioned that we were willing to have a look at the information in our archives for subscribers whose roots were in the four parishes. Family Tree magazine (whose address is now 61 Great Whyte, Ramsey, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE17 1HL and not as given in Vol 1 No 2) in the course of a brief review of PENNANT made this information public knowledge (with my approval) and we have had over a dozen enquiries in less than 14 days. Almost all have been dealt with most efficiently by Phyllis Horman. We also have to thank Norma Knight for help with the enquiries relating to those with roots in Backwell.

Now for the first article in a regular series on FAMILY HISTORY. The writer Phyllis Horman has been helping the Society and other researchers for many years. She now writes briefly of some of the queries she has dealt with and the people she now calls friends who live in many countries across the World (and whose ancestors lived in Backwell, Nailsea, Tickenham and Wraxall)

It never ceases to amaze me the number of people, from various countries, there are whose ancestors were natives of Nailsea Wraxall and around. In particular I have had many enquiries from America, Australia and Canada.

Going back over the last ten or twelve years some of the names I have dealt with are ATTWELL, BEACHAM, COX, COOMBS, CRANE, DURBIN, GODWIN, HIATT, HODGES, PARSONS, RIDGE, SHEPSTONE, SUMMERELL, WARFIELD, WILLCOX, WINSOR and WRIGHT of Nailsea. HOBBS, MITCHELL, ROGERS, STOKES, and WADE of Wraxall and various glassworkers, but in particular PRICE. A few of these names and others have been associated with my own family and some of those enquiring I have met and are now pen pals.

Quite a few years ago, one American was adamant that he was directly descended from "Godwin, Earl of West Saxon" (sic) and I suppose he thought I would prove it. Being entirely ignorant of my own country's history (or am I?) I asked him where West Saxon was or did he mean the race of West Saxon? According to him it was a large area of land in England and not a race of people. He asked many questions and whatever answers I gave were wrong as far as he was concerned.

He sent a photocopy of an old postcard of Tyntesfield House and he was sure that this was the original ancestral home. When I told him where it was and when it was built I was definitely wrong about that! Next was a picture of Clevedon Court and of course I was wrong about that too! In trying to explain about the origin of surnames I remarked that some serfs could be known by their masters' names in the manner of American slaves. I don't think he took kindly to that because I heard very little from him afterwards. He seemed very class conscious.

A gentleman from Pontypool wanted the CRANEs from Nailsea and Wraxall; they were mainly coal miners. Arthur and I met in Wraxall churchyard, where he was looking for Crane tombstones. He had a little daughter, Joanne, with him, she was about 2 to 3 years old, she must be in her mid teens now. Arthur and I keep in touch and still try to help each other, we have also spoken over the phone several times.

I think the first Americans that I met were Bill and Dorothy, now living in Florida. Bill has a family mystery concerning the BEACHAM and ROGERS families which so far hasn't been solved. I don't give up as it may involve one of my own families.

The WADEs of Wraxall; so much has happened concerning this family. Firstly Ken from Yakima Washington USA I was able to

help considerably. He was also interested in the village, so I sent him two sets of transparencies, one a general walk around with some geography history and legends; the other set a walk around the church explaining each picture. He sent me some of various parts of America where they had travelled and a lively book on the Selah Valley, the area where he lived. We wrote, and sometimes phoned on special occasions - especially New Year - but sadly he died unexpectedly last September.

Next Len from Marlborough wanted the WADEs, and we are now great friends, write regularly and have met on three occasions. Thirdly a lady from Worcester wanted the same family. Eventually I persuaded the three of them to write to each other.

Jim and Marlene from Australia are two very well liked pen pals. Jim wanted the WINSORs of Nailsea, again many of these were coalminers. He was able to find the two brothers who emigrated to Australia. A few years ago they came over to England for a few weeks holiday and so came to Nailsea where Judith and I had the pleasure of meeting them.

John from Upton on Severn wanted information on a particular family\*... plenty of them from the late 1700s on. He was amused with information from the old newspaper cuttings concerning one member of the family in the mid 1800s who was a bit of a "fly boy". John said that he had a cousin in Bristol who doesn't like talking about members of the past families and, after reading the newspaper reports, he can see why. (\**Editor's note. name omitted to protect the innocent!*)

I just cannot understand why some people are afraid to look back in case there is a "skeleton in the cupboard". I think it is great fun and, why worry? It all happened a long time ago.

# Youngwood Lane, Nailsea

by Margaret Thomas

Youngwood Lane remains one of the most unspoilt historical landscapes in Nailsea. Lying in an isolated position on the southern fringe of the parish, close to the Backwell boundary, few people were aware of its existence until, in 1989 it was threatened by developers who wished to build a new village along the valley between Nailsea and Backwell. Considerable local protest over a protracted period, led by the Morgans Hill Protection Society, aided by the Council for the Protection of Rural England, eventually led to the failure of the development plans, since the developers failed to get the land zoned for housing in the Local Draft Plan. However because of the threat a new look has been taken to the Youngwood Lane area, which has led to a heightened awareness of its importance.

Youngwood Lane remains essentially an agricultural landscape: a palimpsest of many centuries of farming. In the mediaeval period much of the area to the north of the lane was included in one of the large, commonly owned, open fields of Nailsea. This was the area where the arable crops were grown. These large open fields were divided into sizeable strips, some tenants holding just one strip while others held many more. Because of the restricted space within a strip, and in order to aid drainage, the strips were ploughed in the same direction each year. The primitive plough of the period pushed the soil to one side only, thus ensuring over a period of years, that a ridge formed, sometimes growing to several feet in height. The late Mr Pullan argued that traces of "ridge and furrow" could be identified around Youngwood House Farm, but it is also possible that later attempts at drainage could have produced the same features in the landscape.

Over the centuries, the strips were enclosed or combined together piecemeal, the resulting field boundaries following the outline of some of the strips. This can be clearly seen in the earliest maps of the area dating from the late 1830s.(1)

While the pasture land lay to the north and west of Nailsea, on Nailsea Heath and Nailsea Moor, the Youngwood Lane area provided the hay meadows for the parish. The less well drained meadows bordering the River Kenn were used to grow the grass which, converted to hay, provided the only winter feed available at the time. Few animals apart from those required for breeding, were kept through the winter because of the shortage of winter feed. Hay meadows were therefore an important component of the agricultural economy.

The communal aspect of agriculture which characterised much of the mediaeval economy, gradually disappeared, leaving in common ownership, only a few small patches of the former arable fields and hay meadows, apart from the aforesaid moors and heath, by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

One area of the former hay meadows was converted into water meadows, probably in the seventeenth century. Water Meadows were a revolutionary attempt to produce young grass very early in the year, a critical necessity when winter feed was in such short supply. To provide the grass, the meadows were flooded and a complicated series of leats implemented which ensured a constant supply of running water spilling over the fields, thus preventing frost.

As the strips of the open fields were combined and enclosed, a transformation of the landscape took place. Instead of huge unbroken fields, compact fields surrounded by hedges or stone walls were created. These in turn became nucleated around

individual farmsteads and the landscape of Youngwood Lane as we know it today emerged.(2)

It is uncertain precisely when this reorganisation took place, probably over a long period of time, but since most of the surviving buildings seem to have originated in the sixteenth century, this would appear to be the most likely date. The landscape, therefore, which evolved in sixteenth and early seventeenth century is the one that survives today: a landscape of old farmhouses, surrounded by a network of compact fields, demarcated by hedgerows or stone walls. It is a pastoral landscape; grazing replacing arable once adequate supplies of grain could be obtained from other areas more suited to arable production.

The farmhouses survive as interesting examples of vernacular architecture. Three of the six are listed buildings.(3) As far as can be ascertained from external features, part of Coombe Grange, formerly Smokey Hole, is the oldest of the surviving farmhouses along Youngwood Lane. The original farm house consisted of the frontage facing the road, which may have been a long house, divided by a cross passage; the family inhabited one end and the animals the other. In the early nineteenth century a wing with a symmetrical facade was tacked onto the back of the old house, thus creating a double stack house.

Youngwood House Farm and neighbouring Deerhurst both date from the 1600s. The former retained, for many years, its cider house and press, cider playing an important part in an agricultural economy. Youngwood Farm, a confusing juxtapositioning of names, has a late eighteenth century facade but almost certainly stands on the site of an earlier house.

Bizleys, further along the lane has the appearance of a typical Victorian farmhouse, but again this is little more than skin deep

and restoration work revealed that the Victorian frontage disguised a much earlier cross passage house. The last of the six farms along Youngwood Lane was Bartlett's, now Cherry Orchard, which has been so altered and rebuilt over the years that little of interest survives externally, apart from the farm buildings.

The tranquillity of the agricultural scene was transformed in the middle of the nineteenth century by the opening of two coal pits in the area. The collieries were powered by steam engines whose resultant pollution earned the area the name "Smokey Hole". The two coal pits were Youngwood, at the bottom of the hill, and White Oak, at the top. Although coal mining had been a feature of the Nailsea landscape since the sixteenth century the two Youngwood pits were relatively late comers to the scene - Youngwood opened in the mid 1840s and Whiteoak a year or so later. The Nailsea coalfield is in general poorly documented, but some evidence survives for this area since the two pits were part of the company of White and Co who operated the largest coalmining consortium in Nailsea. In 1848, White and Co's "Valuation of Plant" (ie Machinery)(4), included Youngwood Pit:

Pumping Engine Closed top 44 "	8' stroke
Winding engine, High Pressure	15 "
Two boilers, stack	13'diameter

The Youngwood workings extended well beyond the parish boundary, under land belonging to the Marquess of Bath in Backwell. Youngwood Pit closed in 1867.

Whiteoak was in operation by 1846 and was one of the last to close in the 1880s. Rules governing the operation of the pit survive and outline, in some detail, the safety measures in force just before its closure.

Expansion of the Nailsea coalfield was hampered by lack of good communications and transport. The arrival of the railway in the 1840s partially solved the problem, although it had little effect on the development of Nailsea as a whole. Bulky cargoes such as coal, could be carried quickly and cheaply. Tramways were built from the collieries to link up with the main line, where a coal siding was built. A planned tramway linking Double Screen Pit on Station Road with the main line never transpired but one linking it with Youngwood and Whiteoak was completed. A sizeable embankment carried the tramway down the hill to Youngwood and then crossed the River Kenn on a viaduct. Grace's pit at West End also had a tramway link which ran in a huge curve down the hill from where Engine Lane now joins St Marys Grove to Bizleys Farm and then parallel with Youngwood Lane to the coal sidings.(5)

After the closure of the mines, the colliery buildings at Whiteoak were converted into outbuildings, but only a few footings remain of the buildings at Youngwood. Sizeable remnants of the embankment survive shrouded in bushes. These together with a few cinder - capped stone walls, are all that remain today to indicate the area's important industrial past.

Historic landscapes are often rich in wildlife and Youngwood Lane is no exception. The Nailsea branch of the Avon Wildlife Trust manages Netcotts Field, close to the junction of The Perrings and Youngwood Lane. At Coombe Grange, agricultural techniques have changed little over the past fifty years, resulting in a range of flowers and fauna unequalled on more up-to-date farms where pesticides and such like are in use. Evidence of this lies in the magnificent daffodil field behind the house which provides a spectacular display in springtime. This network of fields between Coombe Grange and Bucklands Pool has been designated as a "site of County Wildlife Conservation Importance" since it is "a remnant of unimproved natural



grassland which contains species now getting rare due to changing agricultural practices". (6) Part of Bucklands Pool and Morgans Hill are also so designated.

Youngwood lane is narrow, closed in with high hedgerows and stone walls. Walking can be dangerous but it is linked to the surrounding area by a network of footpaths. Care needs to be taken but it is an historic landscape well worth exploration!

## References

- 1 B.R.O AC/PL 121 1-2 Map of Nailsea No date
- 2 S.R.O DD/RT 427 Tithe Map and Award of Nailsea 1844
- 3 For details of Listed Buildings contact Woodspring Conservation Office
- 4 S.R.O. DD/SB 12. Valuation of Plant at White & Co 1848
- 5 S.R.O. DD/SB 57/1 Sale Map of Whiteoak & Youngwood Collieries 1883
- 6 Avon Wildlife Trust : Wildlife in the Kenn and Land Yeo Valleys  
B.R.O. Bristol Record Office  
S.R.O. Somerset Record Office

## CORRESPONDENCE

I was pleased to find the letters that I have received of such interest. One from Phyllis Horman has been reproduced elsewhere as an article in its own right. Another from Mike Tozer who lives in Pill (and who for many years has been a keen supporter of the Society) refers to the article on the Nailsea Meadow by Henry Abbott (of whose recent death I learn with regret)

Mike writes that he came across this information in the  
ETHEL THOMAS AVONMOUTH COLLECTION

"The Steamship Nailsea Court hit the former "fever ship" MARGARIDA off the western moorings near the mouth of the River Avon on 17th November 1915 following which the Margarida was towed to Bristol and broken up. She had been replaced by Ham Green Hospital (opened in July 1899) as the reception hospital for persons arriving at the Port of Bristol suffering from infectious diseases, and had been moored near the mouth of the river since 1892."

Editor's note- Our next edition will contain an article by David Sowden about the only warship that carried NAILSEA'S name together with further information about both Nailsea Court and the Margarida.

David Chappell has written to me regarding his second article on Henry Burgum. He writes

"An interesting query has arisen since I mentioned that John Alvis, a tenant of Hales Farm/Tickenham house had died there in 1883. Record extracts in Nailsea Library show that he had been there since 1861 and quote Kelly's Directory. However, in the Tickenham papers of the Greenhill Collection. also in the Nailsea library, is a manuscript slip which just says: '1861 Kelly Ralph Montagu Bernard, surgeon, Tickenham House'

A search in Kelly will in due course clarify the matter"

David goes on to add an old adage which might well be adopted by any researcher CHECK YOUR SOURCE!

### **CORRECTION**

Vera Waite tells me that the William Carter the blacksmith mentioned in her article "Farleigh before WW2" was operating from about 1910 to 1920.(I must apologise as it was my error - Editor)

# **DO YOU REMEMBER.....**

## **1. Memories of Nailsea Court**

**by Clifford Kortright**

(who lived ay Nailsea Court with his parents from roughly 1921 to about May 1925 and provided the following information in a conversation with the editor)

I certainly remember we were at Nailsea Court during the very hot summer of 1921. I remember that the water supply at Nailsea Court was supplied by a windmill in front of South Common Farm and when it was very calm and there wasn't enough wind to pump the water men were told to go and pump it out of the well by hand. It was pumped up into a water tower which i think is still there although the windmill has gone. The water then ran to Nailsea Court to tanks in the top of the house.

That water was for drinking and cooking. The bath water and washing water and such like was soft water collected off the roof into an enormous tank under part of the terrace. That was pumped up to the top of the house by a paraffin engine I remember.

Every sink in the house had three taps, marked spring, soft and hot. Of course the hot water was soft water. Everyone was warned

not to drink water out of the bath taps or basin taps because of course that was soft water. occasionally the tank used to go dry. Then an SOS was sent out for old Charlie Baker who managed the pumping engine to get it started up and pump up some water.

Charlie Baker lived at West End, Nailsea and looked after the water supply and also gas for lighting. They had an acetylene gas plant and every day or so he had to recharge it with carbide. He had to get the spent carbide out and that was wonderful stuff for whitewashing or to make mortar for building walls. The farmers used to come and have it for that purpose. They used to get the carbide in 1cwt and 2 cwt drums (approx 54 and 108 Kg). You opened them with a hammer and a chisel rather like opening a tin of cat food. They were very useful things afterwards for rainwater barrels and suchlike.

There were a number of other men working at Nailsea Court on the Estate. Tom Hunt was the estate carpenter, he did all repairs in the house and on the farms and made almost anything that was wanted. He was a extremely skilled man in that he could imitate ancient panelling, or build a farm waggon or hang a gate or do any such job.

There were two gardeners, John Horler and Fred Horler, who were no relation to each other. They were always working around in the gardens. Fred Horler died in 1922 when I think there was a fever epidemic. I can remember him quite well. John Horler lived in the cottage at the bottom of the drive and sang in Chelvey Church choir. Then there was the coachman who became the chauffeur, that was Bill Phillips, he lived in the other cottage of the two right at the bottom of the drive and I think it was one of his children that got drowned in the bathing pool. I cannot date that very well.

There were several other boys employed as stable boys at different times.

There was an old odd job man named William Amesbury who lived with his mother near Nailsea Old Church somewhere. He had very big knobby feet and all the other men used to call him

"Tooty" Amesbury, he was a very obliging chap, very nice chap indeed. I think he died about 1928.

Then of course there were other people who may have been employed to get jobs done. Every year they used to mow the paddocks. Then there was haymaking to be done. They built hay mows out in the back in the corner of the small paddock and Charlie Baker used to thatch them most beautifully. Generally they built round mows. They cut the grass down below the terraces as there is a strip of ground going down to the railway line. this had been terraced in three terraces and daffodils planted on the banks. After the daffodils had died down they mowed the grass for hay but eventually by doing that they killed the daffodils because they should have been left longer until the leaves died right down.

If you went right down through the garden at Nailsea court there was a tunnel under the railway that Commander Evans had had built to get into the field the other side where the bathing pool was. this was on the River Kenn. He just put two dams across the river and built a bathing pool there. It was about 6feet deep at the deep end and 3 feet at the shallow end. The bottom of it was all tiled with white tiles. There was wood all round and a chain all round hanging from the wood; you could catch hold of the chain from inside the pool when you swam to the side. I swam in it many times although I was never very keen on swimming.

This was where several children including one of the Phillip's I think drowned when they went down there to play one day. Some of them came back and said that one or two or maybe more were in the pool. Everyone rushed down but it was too late by the time people got there, they were drowned.

(Mrs Waite has mentioned to the Editor that she believes that two of the Phillips' children were drowned in this tragedy together with a friend)

## **2. Changing Trains at Nailsea and Backwell**

**by Derek Chaplin**

Probably the most significant change which happened on the railway locally was in the early hours of Saturday 21st May 1892 when the last broad gauge train passed through Nailsea and Backwell on the Penzance - Paddington Mail Train. This marked the end of the original Great Western 7ft-0 1/4in. gauge railway which had been developed by I K Brunel in opposition to Stephenson's 4ft-8 1/2in. "narrow gauge" railway which had by then become the standard gauge of the main lines of all the British railway companies.

In the past 35 years there have been many changes to the trains and the locomotives that hauled them. Up until 1955 the steam engine reigned supreme; almost all the types of the Great Western locomotive could be seen passing through the station. The announcement of British Railways Modernisation Plan in 1955 sounded the death knell for the steam locomotive which was to be replaced by either route electrification or diesel locomotives and railcars.

The steam engines slowly disappeared in the early 1960s, one of the last regular steam passenger trains was the 5-15pm stopping train from Bristol to Wells via Yatton and the Cheddar Valley, this brought many of the city office workers home. This steam hauled service finished with the closure of the Cheddar Valley railway in 1963.

Another regular steam hauled train was the Plymouth Parcels which came through Nailsea and Backwell at about 4-00pm each day. Summer Saturdays always produced a crop of steam hauled special trains to and from Weston and other destinations in the West Country.

One of these which always created a good deal of interest to the railway enthusiasts of those days was a working train from Sheffield Bank Top to Weston which had a former London and North Eastern Railway engine hauling it. When the last steam hauled train passed through in regular service is not recorded but it was probably early in 1965.

In the years 1958/1959 delivery of diesel railcars began and the 3 coach "Cross Country Units" soon started to displace steam trains on the Taunton - Bristol and beyond services. Following deliveries of the 3 car Suburban units they soon replaced steam trains on the Weston - Bristol and other local services in the area.

Unlike the other regions of British Railways, the Western Region adopted the diesel hydraulic system for its locomotives. This was based on designs used by German Railways and uses an hydraulic torque converter to change the energy generated by the diesel engine into traction force at the wheel. The rest of British railways used the diesel electric system where a diesel driven generator powers electric motors to turn the locomotive wheels.

Three classes of main line locomotives were introduced:-

"The Hymecks", built by the Manchester loco builders Beyer Peacock.

"The Warship class" a Swindon built design closely based on German practice (all the locomotives were eventually named after Royal Navy ships).

"The Western class" built at Crewe and Swindon. These were driven by German designed engines and were all given names with the prefix "Western"

These three types of locomotive took over the running of the West Country - London and Long Distance Cross Country services for most of the 1960s and early 1970s. In the 1970s it became apparent that the diesel hydraulic locomotives of the Western region, being non standard with the rest of the British Rail Fleet, could not be used nationwide, as they required separate maintenance and stores facilities and they were not familiar to drivers outside the Western Region. The decision was taken to withdraw them progressively as other forms of traction became available. The last diesel hydraulic locos went through the station in February 1977 when they hauled an enthusiasts special to Plymouth.

In the mid 1970s High Speed trains began to be introduced on the London Services. As more have become available from other parts of the country following main line electrification they have over the past decade taken over most of the long distance services to the North of Scotland. Nowadays only a few long distance trains are hauled by locomotives.

With the sectorisation of British Rail local services are now run by Regional Railways, using, new to Bristol, one or two coach diesel railcars on the Weston, Taunton and west of England services. On 27th September 1992 the last of the Modernisation Programme delivered railcars with their slam doors and seats behind the driver were withdrawn after 35 years service in this area.



Few goods trains are to be seen in daylight hours but those which do run are very different to those of the 1960s, which had 40 or 50 small 10-12 ton capacity 4 wheel vehicles followed at the rear by the Guard's Van. Nowadays most trains are of bogie vehicles which run at much higher speeds mostly specially designed for specific traffics. The twice weekly China Clay sludge train from St Blazey in Cornwall to Irvine in Scotland with its 13 stainless steel wagons carrying over 1000 tons is typical of the modern era freight train.

What of the future? Main line electrification from Paddington is proposed for the turn of the century. Trains to and from the Continent via the Channel Tunnel will be a daily sight from the end of 1994. Privatisation may bring very different trains or many changes of paint schemes of existing trains. No doubt there will be as many changes in the next 30 years as there has been in the past to interest the railway enthusiast and historian.

### **3. The Wraith of Wraxall Hill**

**by Phyllis Horman**

When my Mother and her brothers and sisters from West Hill (now Stony Steep) were at school they had two ways to get there. One way was to come half way down Stony Steep then cross a field into Ham Lane then up the score.

The alternative was to go along the top Bristol to Clevedon Road, and then down Wraxall Hill to the main road. When returning home this way on reaching the point where the hill flattens out after the nasty bend they would stop and shout

"Come out, come out, whoever thee bist, an' all of we will fight thee". Then they would take to their heels and run like mad in case "Whoever bist" came out.

Why did they do this? They did not know but they had been told the spot was haunted. Even as late as the 1960s people have said to me that they experienced a peculiar cold feeling when passing the spot.

I wonder whether the spirits of Samuel Still or the ghost of Mr Philip Crampton could be the cause?

Samuel Still was a Rector of Wraxall and had been attending an Assize Court at the Failand Inn. He was a widower of six months and drank too deeply of the local brew. On his way home he fell from his horse on Wraxall Hill and was killed. He was buried on 11th February 1697/1698.

Mr Philip Crampton and his family came to live at "The Cottage" in the Avenue in 1837. Early in 1838 he and his wife and children were returning to their house by coach when the horses bolted while coming down Wraxall Hill. Mr Crampton while trying to help the coachman to control the horses was thrown from the coach and killed. He was buried on 15 February 1838 aged 46 years.