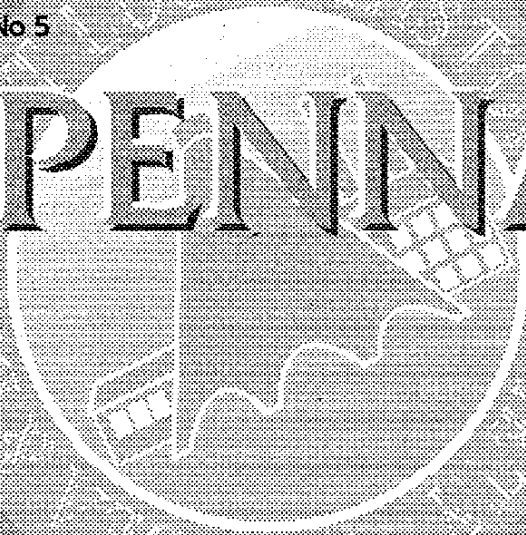


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PENNANT



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**BACKWELL, NAILSEA, TICKENHAM
AND WRAXALL**

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History in our Church Towers

by John Brain

If you were asked what was the oldest working mechanical installation in your parish, I doubt you would have a ready answer. If I said that many churches provide a weekly reminder perhaps that would give you a clue. I refer, of course, to the bells of our parish churches which sound week by week. In the villages served by "PENNANT" each has its peal of bells - 8 at both Backwell and Wraxall and 6 at Nailsea (Holy Trinity) and Tickenham respectively.

The bells of our individual parishes were considered almost as important as the scale of the tower in terms of local prestige; the more money that could be found, the more impressive and elaborate the tower, and in the same way the heavier the peals of bells - parish rivalry and oneupmanship is by no means confined to the 20th century! Bells served both an ecclesiastical and a civil purpose, and as the church in those days wore both hats very firmly, before the days of local government as we know it there was never any argument between church and parish when money raising decisions had to be made. If the church annual vestry meeting decided that money had to be found for the bells (or anything else) a rate was levied on the inhabitants and that was that. Villages on the whole had much good will towards their bells, especially after the Reformation, when the nation had broken with Rome, and "special dates" to remind people that the King and the Church of England were now the dominating forces in the life of the country were marked from the belfry on a regular basis.

Thus the entries in the churchwardens' accounts at Backwell ran true to form from the earliest records of the 17th century; always on November 5th the ringers were paid to celebrate the failure

of Guy Fawkes and his fellow Catholic supporters to blow up the Houses of Parliament eg. "Spent upon ye ringers ye 5th November 1698 - 12/6d"; on Oakapple Day May 29th the bells were always rung to celebrate the Restoration of the monarchy under Charles II. St George's day, April 23rd, was also commemorated, so we find that in the days of scant other communication, state and national occasions gained a regular place in the calendar when the bells were sounded over the parish as a matter of course.

As far as ringing the bells for church services (such as there were), this was neither expected nor sought, and it was not really until the influence of the Oxford Movement in the 19th century that the clergy were encouraged to seek a closer connection with their ringers; before this the ringers' reputation for belligerence, drunkenness and a total disregard for ecclesiastical authority was hard to break, many holding the view that what was rung in the tower, and when, was irrelevant to any except those taking part in the performance. Happily those times are long past, and in most cases today ringers and clergy work well together in the service of the church.

Almost all bells bear inscriptions and founders marks which take forms ranging from initials, through crosses crowns and emblems of every conceivable kind as well as including a wide variety of texts.

Mediaeval founders too were quite uninhibited when it came to advertising their products, and were not averse to running down their competitors in the inscriptions they placed on their bells in an age when the laws of libel were almost non-existent. Backwell bells include an interesting example as we shall see later.

Of the eight bells in the tower two were almost certainly cast in the 15th century. The fourth has obviously never been tuned as it

bears an abundance of chisel marks and chips around the lip which eventually produced the right sound to conform with the scale of notes for the rest. The significance of the change from Roman Catholicism is reflected in its inscription. These were sensitive times as the young Church of England flexed its muscles, and parishes, some reluctantly, kept a wary eye open and took their cue from the King, Henry VIII. Latin inscriptions, usually invocations to the Saints, were no longer welcome - in their place founders trod carefully producing rather bland inscriptions neither supportive of Rome nor offending the church their paymaster. Thus the crudely and poorly spelt early English inscription on the fourth bell skilfully avoided offence to anyone! The founder's initials "H.G." are generally attributed to the work of the Bristol founder Henry Gefferies who with his father Thomas was active in the city during the period 1508 - 1555.

The fifth bell is definitely pre-reformation, but the modern founders had the good sense to include the old inscription when the bell was recast in 1901, and the old Roman Catholic invocation to the Saints is stated in bold Lombardic capitals: "Sce Luca ora pro nobis" (Saint Luke pray for us). Founders' marks on the waist include a sailing ship, a crown, and a Maltese Cross somewhat embellished. The ship emblem can be found on various bells in our area, and its design is not dissimilar to the one which appears on the Bristol coat of arms. Dating individual bells is not easy, but the opinion of ringing archivists suggests that it was founded in the city by John Gosselin who operated circa 1430 - 1480.

The churchwardens' accounts show close attention to the monetary needs of both bells and ringers throughout the 18th century. Major work was undertaken in 1758 when the decision was taken to recast the two heaviest bells of the then ring of five which weighed 19 and 14 cwts respectively. (ie 976kg and 713kg). The work was given to William Evans of Chepstow and

the bells were hauled to Bristol and despatched across the Severn by boat. The work was completed in a relatively short time, and within a year the wardens had paid George Nott a contemporary Bristol bell-hanger £45-0-0d "for casting two bells and hanging according to agreement, and £2-11-0d for addition of metal", so presumably Evans portion of the settlement was included. It was the inscription though, on the fourth bell of the old five, which reminds us that advertising was not invented by ITV!

"Bilby and Boosh may come and see What Evans and Nott have done by me 1758"

Thus runs the couplet. Thomas Bilbie and John Bush ran the famous Chew Stoke foundry at that time and obviously Evans was not going to miss a chance to emphasise his success at obtaining a contract in the heart of rival territory! The spelling was a secondary consideration!

A new bell making the peal up to six was cast by Thomas Mears of London in 1820 but not until recent times (1938) were two more bells added by Taylors of Loughborough to complete the fine octave which Backwell possesses today.

"Ringing the changes" is very much a part of our everyday speech today, but those of us who take part in this most English of pastimes are well aware that the skills we employ and the sounds we make are part of our history and heritage - a fitting tribute to the bell founders of sometimes three, four or even five hundred years ago and still serving as the voice of the parish, marking events both local and national and a constant weekly reminder on Sundays to those in earshot that here at least is one day in the week that is, or should be, different to the rest.

Dating Wraxall Photos

Wraxall Guides and Wraxall "Mixed Infants"

a discussion between Mike Tozer and Phyllis Horman

(Editors' Note: "The M. J. Tozer Collection" has been the source of many important photographs held by the Society in its collection of Local History Memorabilia and the following exchange of views in connection with two such photographs I thought would be of interest to our readers. It also gives me the chance to acknowledge the help that Mike has provided to me personally and to Local History in the area.)

As the photographs related to Wraxall I thought that I should refer them to Phyllis Horman who as readers are aware is our spokesperson for all things from Wraxall.

This then is the gist of the correspondence:-

"The Wraxall Guides photograph"

Comment by Mike Tozer

Although your researcher seems to indicate a date around 1908 for the Wraxall Guides photo, I would have put the date at post 1919. At least the print I have appears to have been produced at this date even if perhaps it was a print made much later from an earlier original photograph but even this is doubtful because of the following:-

The photographer was J W Garratt of Ashley Down Bristol and all his pre 1914 photographs have his signature on the glass plate negative so being reproduced on any print made from a negative of pre 1914.

After 1919 he stopped signing his negatives and used a rubber stamp with his name and address on the backs of all the prints he made.

The original print that I have of the Wraxall guides bears no signature on the image but does bear Garratt's rubber stamp signature on the back of the print.

So, as it has the rubber stamp but no actual signature:-

- a) the print was made post 1919 to get the rubber stamp
- b) the negative should not be pre 1914 or the signature would normally be present even if the print was later.

Phyllis Horman then made further enquiries of the many people she knew who had knowledge of the Wraxall families of the early 20th century.

She then wrote again to Mike "to explain why we differ".

I have spoken to Mrs Dorothy Dyer daughter of Florence May Warry, Mrs Betty Blake niece of Elizabeth Mary Windsor and Mrs Isabel Williams niece of Selina Price and we all agree that the photo cannot have been taken before 1912 or after 1916.

We have identified the following girls [reading left to right]:

Back row 3 Florence May Warry (later Mrs Summerell)
 4 Elizabeth Mary Windsor (later Mrs Miles)
 6 Mary (Molly) Shepherd (later Mrs Pearce)

Front Row 4 Miss Baker
 5 Selina Price (later Mrs Tremlett)

Here are our reasons:

I have referred to the Wraxall registers of which the Society has copies to find the dates of the baptisms of the ones that are named above. Selina Price was baptised in August 1892 and Elizabeth Windsor in December 1898. The nieces agree that these would have been the years that they were born. Florence May Warry was baptised in 1900 as was Mary Sheppard. The former was probably born late in 1899.

Taking the dates we suggest for the actual date of the photo this would make Selina between 20 and 24; Elizabeth Mary 14 and 18 and Florence May 12 and 16.

Phyllis then comments

I would have said that EMW was about 15/16 in the photo. At the date we put forward FMW would have been between 12 and 16 which I can accept; she always was a tall well built person and many of her children were the same (she had about 9 I think). I was at school with some of them.

Wraxall C E Mixed Infants photograph

In the other photo the girl in the centre of the front row is holding what appears to be a slate on which is written the words

"Wraxall C E Mixed Infants"

Phyllis has identified the gentleman on the right as the Rev Henry Vaughan Rector of Wraxall who was buried on 5th January 1921. If as she believes (and her belief is shared by Mary's niece Betty Blake) the younger lady is Elizabeth Mary Windsor (always

known as Mary) then the photo would date to about 1914-1916 when Elizabeth Mary was 16-18.

Elizabeth Mary Windsor was a pupil teacher at Wraxall and later it is believed at Nailsea.

Editor's note . Taking the arguments as presented I would place the Guides' picture nearer to 1914 [maybe something to do with the outbreak of war or Empire day if it was celebrated then] and the school photo c 1916. In many ways it could be said that there is little dispute between the parties. Mike Tozer says that the original cannot be before Garratt stopped signing his photos c1914 and Phyllis and her friends say it is between 1912 and 1916. I declare it a draw and look forward to readers' comments.

The Nailsea Golf Course

by Clifford Kortright

Brief History

Originally the golf course at Nailsea was a private affair. Commander Evans of Nailsea Court had a four hole course made around the house so that he and his friends could have a game.

Then the course was expanded. The larger course originally had its first tee and the clubhouse in the corner of the field opposite the top of Engine Lane near its junction with St Marys Grove. Play was then from a tee below the wall that adjoins the bridle path to Morgans hill towards Four Gables, but on the other side of the road. Until a few years ago the first tee, which was stone built, still existed in the corner of that field. Unfortunately it has now gone and all trace has vanished owing to the many alterations that have taken place near this spot.

When I first remember the course shortly before 1930 further changes had taken place.

LAYOUT OF THE COURSE [see also maps 1 and 2] [the following comments refer mainly to map 1]

The first tee had been moved to the position that can be seen on the map. This is near to the wall behind Four gables. That hole was 303 yards long I can remember that. It was down to the wall of South Common Farm Orchard.

The second hole was almost at right-angles (going North West). It was the short hole 125 yards from just behind the first green up against the wall into a bit of very rough ground in the angle of the wall in that field and the angle of the wall that continued

from the orchard. it was very humpy hummocky ground and we used to call the hole the "cup Hole" because it was hollow like a cup. But the groundsman was jolly careful not to put the hole right in the bottom so you didn't have much chance of doing a hole in one. A few people did.

Hole No 3. The mens' tee was just behind the "Cup Hole". You drove over a dry stone wall up across a field in ,I would say a NW direction, up into the corner of a field which I do not know the name of, the green was near the corner of that field. The ladies' tee was almost behind the "Cup Hole" and had a wire netting screen for protection.

Hole No 4. This hole was played in the opposite direction to No 3 and the green was just over the wall alongside the fairway of the first hole. You could in fact easily go onto the wrong green when playing the first hole.

Where you had to go over dry stone walls as you did on holes 3 and 4 there were wooden steps over the walls. This kept cattle off but occasionally sheep made their way over the wall using the steps.

Hole No 5. This hole was the longest hole on the course 373 yards.

Holes numbered 6 and 7 were across the road which was crossed a short distance above Four Gables up Battens Hill. Both these holes and nos 8 and 9 crossed the line of the old tramway from Graces pit.

There was nothing particularly memorable about these four holes except that Nos 8 and 9 were played across a small pond with a plank to be walked to get easily from one side to the other as

can be seen from the map there was a ladies tee to shorten the distance on no 9. The mens' tee for No 9 was a little further from Bizley Farm over a stone wall.

As can be seen from the second map the layout of the course was changed about 1930 and the map also shows later changes when the holes were re-numbered.

I remember Hole No 5. This hole was the longest hole on the course. It was like a "dog-leg" in that you played in a northerly direction back over the field that the fourth hole was on but at a slight angle. Then you turned a corner of a field and ended up in the corner near a little orchard which I think belonged to Coombs' farm [Cherry Orchard Farm] about their most outlying piece of ground.

The 6th hole was played towards Battens Hill while the 7th was played to a green just at the back of Four Gables garden. That was where the wicket gates were to get through Four Gables orchard one in each wall onto the road and then across the road another wicket gate. Then there were two more holes in that field now avoiding the big pond to the back of Bizley Farm.

The Clubhouse

The clubhouse was a little wooden hut originally sited at the Engine Lane

junction but it had been moved by the time I first knew it to a site on the West End side of Four Gables beside the first tee and behind the dry stone wall that still exists. The back of the hut was only a yard from the road. Access to the hut from the road was obtained via a stone stile later replaced by a wicket gate that still can be seen in the wall.

It was decided to make it bigger by putting an annex on it for Ladies to use. Down at Nailsea Court at one time they had kept goats and they had a house for that. They decided to take that down and build it onto the old clubhouse which they did. It was an everlasting joke that the ladies were in the goathouse.

Eventually all that was taken down and the new clubhouse put up in the field right opposite Four Gables. The old clubhouse was re-erected in the same field near the hedge alongside Youngwood Lane. This was for the use of the professional.

The new clubhouse stayed there for a great many years and in the wartime became a private house. It was eventually taken down and the football club had it. It was put up in Grove playing fields. It is not there now and I do not know what has happened to it. On the outside wall of the old clubhouse was a very old golf club to show that it was the golf club's clubhouse. What happened to that golfclub I do not know but it would be a museum piece.

Stiles for use by the golfers

They were made of a flat stone on top of the wall and some stones sticking out of the wall to step onto.

There was the one mentioned above at the back of the clubhouse near Four Gables. This was used by people who had finished their round and were heading for the clubhouse.

Two stiles were at the junction of the road going down to Chelvey so that

Commander Evans could walk up from Nailsea Court. He would climb over one stile into the road and then climb over the other

to the first tee or the clubhouse when they were situated behind Four gables.

Gates

Apart from the one mentioned there were two on Battens Hill close to Four

Gables, one each side of the road. One can still be seen adjacent to Four Gables on the Engine Lane side but the other has been recently removed. It had been badly damaged and was almost obscured by the hedge. The third gate has been blocked by a wall but the post can still be seen from its partner in Battens hill in the wall one field away from the road.

Groundsmen

Charlie Frappell was the first groundsman that I remember and he lived at Backwell.

When he left Percy Attwood a professional was employed. He came from Long Ashton Golf Course. He lived in Nailsea and he acted as both groundsman and professional.

After him a professional named Harris came there and also a groundsman who was Herbert Barnett called "Darkie" Barnett. He also lived in Nailsea. Those two were the people who were in charge when the golf course finished at the beginning of the war.

Other Items

Near to the original first tee on Battens Hill itself and opposite Engine Lane was a small "lay by" in which were shot the stones that were used to pave the roadway. By the 1930s these stones

were already sized but in earlier times workers would probably have sat there breaking them into suitable sizes. This layby vanished about ten years ago. There is another still in existence near the foot of Battens hill but it is so overgrown as to be almost unrecognisable.

A Sweet and Lovely Wall (in Tickenham)

by David Chappell

This is a copy of a contemporary manuscript in the Tickenham section of the Greenhill collection in Nailsea Library. The manuscript is on 'stamped' but undated paper. (The "stamp" was a watermark showing that the duty on the paper had been paid.)

Saturday May 27th 1848

Mr-- Coombs Junr, agreed to rebuild the boundary wall between an Orchard belonging to and occupied by Mr Samuel Coombs Senr. and a Barton belonging to the Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol and occupied by Mr Robert Evans situate in the Parish of Tickenham in the County of Somerset throughout the whole length thereof leaving no Gap, opening or Gateway and also the wall of the said Barton adjoining the Parish road leading to Clevedon with the exception of a small portion now covered with ivy and in good repair. The wall to be not less than two feet in thickness at the bottom and one foot six inches at the top and five feet in height. Also to pin up and secure the South Wall and Buttresses.

To provide all the required stone, lime and Coal Ashes and other materials required- The whole of the Walls to be well pointed and cleaned off - The coping stones to be not less than one foot in height by the width of the wall - to be well fixed and secured. The Mortar used to be carefully mixed of good lime and Coal ashes or sharp clean sand in the proportion of one third lime to two thirds Coal ashes or sand. Not less than nine tons of coal ashes being used.

To perform the whole of the work in the best manner and find all materials and labour of their respective kinds under the

direction and to the entire satisfaction of Mr Thomas Ward of Bristol - and for the sum of Ten Pounds.

Ex J.W. T.W. (There are NO signatures, just these initials)

Notes:-

A Barton was a farmyard, or more technically, that part of an estate farmed by the lord of the manor himself.

Mr Coombs Senior was probably Samuel Wedmore Coombs and Mr Coombs Junr his son Samuel. The father is buried in the Bave Chapel (named after the family of that name) , and the son under the Western yew tree at Tickenham Church.

The 1841 Census shows Samuel Coombs and Robert Evans each being 45 and farmers but not where. The 1851 census shows Samuel Coombs a farmer of 59 acres and Robert Evans of Middletown a farmer of 55 acres.

The 1881 census shows Wm Evans (grandson of Robert) aged 41 and farming at Barn Farm - 62 acres. This tallies with the change to the present Triggol family in 1956 and the wall concerned would appear to be that dividing Barn Farm from the small field on its east.

In a Midsummer Night's Dream Pyramus and Thisbe in the inner play had courting troubles because there was only a chink in the dividing wall through which they could but whisper. In spite of there being no gap, opening or gateway here they would have had no such problem- there was a fine set of steps built into the wall. Members will be able to see this when the Society visits Mr Roger Triggol's farm equipment collection in May 1994. The farm is roughly half way through Tickenham on the right hand side of the road on the way to Clevedon.

Local Lead Mining

by Marie Clarke

Many people are aware of the famous English diarists such as John Evelyn, Rev. Kilvert, Samuel Pepys and Parson Woodforde. A lesser known diarist was John Skinner 1772-1839 antiquarian and Rector of Camerton for 39 years.

In August 1819, on one of his many excursions Skinner was in the vicinity of Brockley Combe with a Mr Richardson and noted "we came upon the Down which had been trenched in several parts in search of lead-ore and Lapis Calaminaris"

The pits extended from the top of Brockley Combe across Goblin Combe (Gobbles Combe) to Wrington and were already abandoned when Skinner passed that way. The quantity of lead these pits yielded is unknown, but the ore raised may have equalled that of one of the Mendip regions, for the remains of pits and grooves still cover a considerable tract of ground.

In the 1860s, Barrow Gurney was known to have numerous veins of haematite, and in 1872 a mine was established on J H Blagrove's property by the persuasive mining agent E L Owen.

Montague Gore had sold Barrow Court to Blagrove in 1856, together with the mineral rights. The Gore family had at one time held "a faire Mansion house" and other property as Lords of the Manor of Charterhouse on Mendip".

Mine shafts are marked on the 1903/4 ed. O.S. map in Slade Wood.

At Kincott Mill, Flax Bourton there was an iron foundry, and in the 1880s this was managed by William Gregory, who specialised in making farm equipment such as troughs and pumps. Iron ore was brought to the foundry from Winford, and William Gregory's daughter, Polly, used to do the hauling. The foundry ceased working during the first World War when William's sons joined the forces.

B.M. Add. MSS 33653 Jefferies MSS. X.V. No 113 Directory & Gazetteer of Somerset with Bristol 1872. Morris & Co.