



Victoria County History of Somerset Newsletter

Issue 14

Winter 2019—20

Welcome to the fourteenth edition of our newsletter. We hope you enjoy it.

Please pass this newsletter on to others. If you are not on our mailing list and would like to receive future copies of the newsletter please let us know by contacting us at vch@swheritage.org.uk.

County Editor's Report

Those of you who have used our VCH websites will notice major changes. The Explore site is available as usual for readers to use at the same address but can no longer be added to or altered. The main website has been absorbed into the website of the Institute of Historical Research and looks and works differently. The main Somerset section can be found at www.history.ac.uk/research/victoria-county-history/county-histories-progress/somerset but most of the old pages have been taken down and I do not currently have access to alter or update. At present you will not find our news and events on the site although I am hoping that for major events I can persuade the IHR to advertise for me!

As a response to this and the long delays in publication we are now providing folders of completed but unpublished and draft parish histories in the searchroom at the Somerset Heritage Centre for use by the public, although with copying restrictions.



Josiah Easton's tomb, Bradford churchyard

Mary Siraut

The main news for this edition is that Scott Pettitt has completed his draft history of Bradford on Tone, home of the Easton family whose graves dominate the churchyard especially the iron and slate chest tomb of engineer and surveyor Josiah Easton. In 2020 Scott will start researching the parish of Wilton, as we are delighted that he is continuing to work with us one day a week for the next two years.



Former school Bradford on Tone

Mary Siraut

We gave talks on the early development of schools in Taunton and the history of Bradford on Tone school in the second half of the 19th century in Castle House, Taunton as part of National Libraries Week. We also put on a small exhibition of books and images on the history of schools in Somerset with the help of the library and archive staff of the Somerset Heritage Centre.

The big event this year was a very successful annual VCH lecture in the Great Hall of Taunton Castle where Professor Barbara Yorke spoke to over 100 people on King Alfred the Great and Somerset.

She gave a background history of Wessex and its divisions and expansion before looking at Alfred himself. Through the ages Alfred has been celebrated as the ideal king and the national hero of the English, especially in the 19th century but also today, although his biography and other surviving works were written in his lifetime by his supporters. She explored Alfred's Somerset connections including the famous Alfred Jewel and the defeat of Guthram but also examined some of the many myths that have arisen since his death including burning the cakes at Athelney.

Barbara Yorke and Alfred will be a tough act to follow but we have plans for an equally riveting event for 2020! Make sure you get the summer edition of the newsletter for all the details.



Waiting for the speaker

Mary Siraut

Bradford Parish Church in the 16th and 17th centuries

The present church building dates back to at least the early 14th century, but was substantially altered between the late 14th century and the early 16th century. A will of 1466 refers to the church of Our Lady of Bradford, but the church was dedicated to St Giles by 1754. This remains its dedication. The church is particularly well documented for the tumultuous period encompassing the Reformation and Commonwealth. Surviving churchwardens' accounts and inventories, ecclesiastical court and visitation records, and probate material, tell us much about the church and its fabric, and the people who worshipped there.

By 1529 there was a 'brotherdyn', perhaps a guild or guild chapel, in the church, to which John Attway bequeathed 20*d*. Attway also left money for torches, which may have been used at funerals, and the All Souls light. John Southey made bequests towards the church's bells in 1533 and gave 6*s*. 8*d*. for two services. Several others made monetary bequests to the church in this period. Agnes Perry left 3*s*. 4*d*. in 1536, Denise Farthing alias Leigh left 16*d*. in 1570, and William Meare bequeathed 3*s*. 4*d*. in 1585, as did Thomas Pearce in 1601.

In 1548 it was noted that the church had 233 communicants. There was no English Bible in 1547. It was reported in 1554 that high altar was not consecrated and the church was said to be in decay. In 1557 there were complaints concerning the church's broken windows. Though there are no further specific references to the poor condition of the church's fabric in the 16th century, in 1577 the churchwardens were reported because they had absented themselves from church and not levied any money for the repair of the churchyard wall, which had collapsed. In 1577 one man was presented for habitual drinking at service time. William Langdon was presented for seldom attending church in 1620, as he travelled considerable distances during the week.

A series of notes at the end of Bradford's earliest parish register detail seating arrangements in the church in the 17th century. In 1614

Alexander Wilcox paid 6*d*. for a seat behind the pulpit. James Norman constructed his own seat in the chancel with the consent of the vicar in 1612. Seating was segregated in 1612 when two seats next to the belfry were granted to women, one of whom, Ellen Ashcombe, was the daughter of another worshipper. Segregation appears to have ended by 1652 when ground for six seats was granted to John Woodhouse, for himself, his wife, their son and three daughters.

In 1623 it was reported that there had been no services for a quarter of a year as the vicar, James Cole, was seriously ill at his wife's house, which lay 14 miles away. The church's fabric may also have been in a poor condition at this time. In 1634-5 the churchwardens were presented at the bishop's consistory court for the state of the tombs and the pulpit cloth. Efforts were made that year to considerably improve the fabric. Glass in some of the windows was replaced, a communion table was purchased for 10*s*., while this table and the church screen were painted at a cost of £4 14*s*. 9*d*. A 'carpet' was also purchased for the communion table, at a cost of £1 12*s*. 6*d*.

The church still has its rood loft, which was repaired and varnished for £2. At the same time 1*s*. 2*d*. was spent on a new lock and key for the rood loft door. The church's organ was repaired and its 'weare' removed from the ground of the church into the rood loft at a cost of £3 10*s*. A new Bible, the Book of Common Payer, and the Book of Homilies were also purchased, for £3 10*s*. 6*d*. The pulpit was moved from the north side of the church to the south side at this time.

Bradford church tower

Mary Siraut





Bradford on Tone church interior looking east

Mary Siraut

An inventory of the church's goods and vestments in 1634 listed a copy of Bishop Jewel's Apology, 'the paraphrases of Erasmus, a book of monuments, a prayer book for the fifth of November, the book of canons, and the book for recreations' as well as a communion cup and cover, a pewter flagon (also for the communion table), a cushion for the pulpit, a linen cloth for the font, surplices and four 'singing bookes'. A new silver communion cup, still in the church's possession, was purchased by the churchwardens in 1662.

Despite improvements, problems with the church persisted. In 1630 it was noted that the walls and tower were in need of repair. The condition of the church was still a concern in 1665 when it was reported that the church walls were defective, some of the battlements had fallen down and a number of tiles had blown off the roof.

In 1637 it was reported that the part of the churchyard at the 'backside', presumably the north, and at the west end, of the church had never been a place of burial, 'very ancient men' in the parish testifying that it had been used as a place of bowling and recreation throughout their lives. It was also noted that the matter had been raised in the court of the archdeacon of Taunton forty years previously, but that had failed to prevent the area being used for sports.

William Buckley, Bradford's vicar, was elected and sworn as parish register to perform marriages in February 1656, suggesting that he was a puritan. Buckley's appointment was probably the result of a sequestration during the Interregnum and he appears to have been deprived of the living at the Restoration when John Brice was installed as vicar by the Crown.

The Chantry

Chantry chapels, in which a priest would chant masses for the souls of the dead, were a ubiquitous feature of English religious life before the Reformation. They were sometimes self-contained buildings on private land, or they occupied a specific area of a parish church or religious house. Bradford's chantry was probably situated in the north transept of the church, where there is still a piscina, or in the south transept, which is structurally distinct from the south aisle. It was founded by John Parson, who was ordained deacon in 1449 and was vicar of Bradford at the time of his death before May 1497.

Parson endowed the chantry with an inn and ½ burgage in Wellington called The Swan, and messuages, lands and tenements in Sampford Parva, Langford Budville and Rimpleton, and awarded a stipend to the chantry priest. John Hussey was the chantrist by 1533 when he was bequeathed 2s. 6d. by John Southey. In 1548 Hussey was described as of 'honest conversation', but 'indifferently learned'. Hussey's residence, known as the chantry house, was a little property with a courtyard adjoining the priest's house. In 1536 the chantry was valued at £4 13s. 4d. yearly. When the chantry was suppressed in 1548 its gross value was put at £5 18s and its net value at £5 14s. 6d. In September that year the king sold the estate to William Chester and Christopher Needham, who shortly afterwards alienated it to two Bradford men, Thomas and Edward Timewell for £137 8s. It was one of the few Somerset chantry estates valued at over £100.

Scott Pettitt



Capital at entrance to chapel

Mary Siraut



Bradford church - probable chantry chapel

Mary Siraut

William Jolliffe and Peterloo

The name Peterloo has echoed across the centuries and has been portrayed as a symbol of authoritarianism and military might against ordinary people, including women and children, gathered at a peaceful pro-democracy rally in St Peter's Fields, Manchester. The events of 16 August 1819 cast a long shadow in the years that followed and have been commemorated in the summer of 2019 during the 200th anniversary.

One person who was there and was able to give a first-hand account was William Jolliffe, whose Somerset seat was at Ammerdown, Kilmersdon, in the north east of the county and whose family archives are cared for at the Somerset Heritage Centre. However, it is a remarkable letter in the archive of Henry Addington, First Viscount Sidmouth, which gives Jolliffe's detailed description of that fateful Monday. Sidmouth was the home secretary at the time of Peterloo, and his archive is also cared for by the South West Heritage Trust, in the Devon Heritage Centre. William Jolliffe was serving in the 15th Hussars in Manchester during the summer of 1819. Writing twenty-five years later in 1845 he was still able to remember what happened with a crystal clarity that brings those dramatic events to life.



Sketch plan of Peterloo based on contemporary maps

Key

HC Hustings cart
M Magistrates
NJ New Jerusalem Chapel
P St Peter's Church
Q Quaker Meeting House
S School
SC Special Constables

A Artillery
CY Cheshire Yeomanry
H Hussars
I Infantry
MY Manchester Yeomanry

The Peterloo Massacre was part of a period of radical agitation dating from the end of the Napoleonic Wars and exacerbated by economic hardship, by the effects of the Corn Laws, which had been passed in 1815, and by a population in which only about 2% of people had the vote. Conditions were particularly bad among the textile workers of Lancashire who saw wages cut and increased unemployment at the same time as food prices were rising. The radical message of men such as Henry Hunt appealed to a population experiencing such hardship, with its calls for parliamentary reform and an increased franchise.

The 'Manchester Meeting' as it was known in its immediate aftermath, was not an isolated event, but the fourth mass meeting organised in large cities that summer, following ones in Birmingham, Leeds and London. The Peterloo meeting was originally planned for 9 August but was postponed until a week later when magistrates proclaimed the original meeting to be illegal. The organisers quickly revised the programme so that it appeared to be less seditious and rearranged it to go ahead on 16 August. On that fateful day people began to gather from early morning at St Peter's Field, an open area surrounded by buildings in the heart of Manchester. Reports of crowds of upwards of 60,000 people alarmed magistrates, so that when the orator Henry Hunt arrived at about 1pm a warrant was issued for his arrest.

The 15th Hussars and the Cheshire Yeomanry were dispatched by the magistrates and the scene quickly became chaotic and full of panic. People fled in all directions in the face of mounted soldiers with sabres. Henry Hunt and other leaders were quickly arrested and taken to the New Bailey Courthouse. There has never been certainty about how many lost their lives that day. Accounts vary between about 15-18 killed and between a further 400-700 injured, either at the meeting, or in the rioting and unrest that followed.

It is clear that the young Jolliffe had little idea of the political and social complexities of the situation in which he found himself, explaining that 'I was at that time a Lieutenant in the 15th Kings Hussars, which Regiment had been quartered in Manchester Cavalry Barracks about six weeks. This was my first acquaintance with a large Manufacturing Population.'

Jolliffe describes in detail how he and his troop were stationed in a street near to the hustings and saw orator Henry Hunt arrive, saying '*Mr Hunt [was] with two or three other men and I think, two women dressed in light blue and white ... in an open Carriage drawn by the People. This Carriage was adorned with blue and white Flags, and the day was fine and hot.*'

Jolliffe saw how the place was so filled with people that their hats seemed to touch. From his perspective the spark that lit the touch paper came from the Manchester Troop of Yeomanry, under the command of the civil authorities, who lacked military experience. He explained how '*they were scattered singly or in small groups over the greater part of the field, literally hemmed up, and hedged into the mob and it required only a glance to discover their helpless position, and the necessity of our being brought to their rescue.*'

The Hussars were ordered in and '*swept this mingled mass of Human Beings before it, People, Yeomen and Constables in their confused attempts to escape ran one over the other, so that by the time we had arrived at the end of the field, the wretched Fugitives were literally piled up to a considerable elevation above the level of the ground.*'

There were significant numbers of injuries, and Jolliffe admitted that the Hussars played their part, describing how, '*The Hussars drove the People forward with the flats of their swords, but sometimes, as is almost inevitably the case when men are placed in such situations, the edge was used*'. This led him to believe that '*nine out of ten of the sabre wounds may have been caused by the Hussars*'.



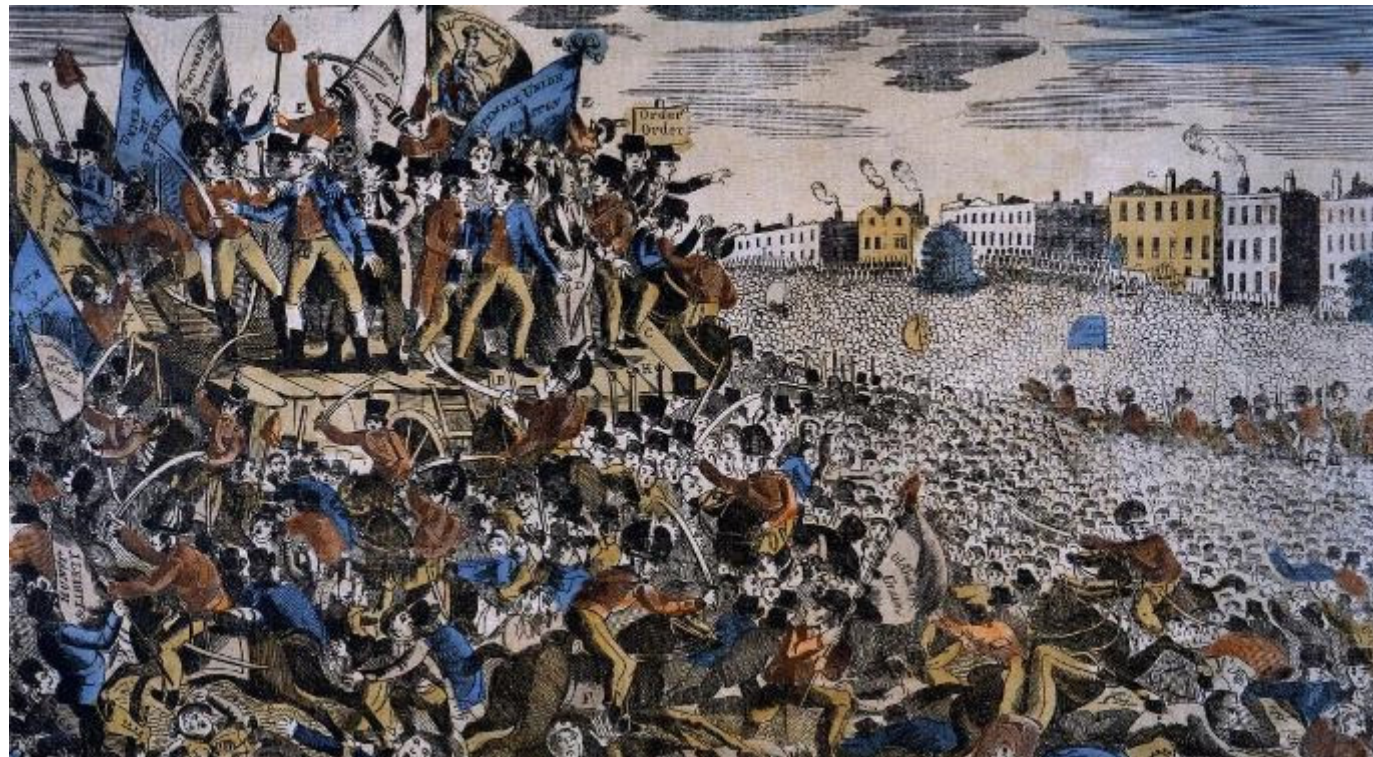
Peterloo by Richard Carlisle

As people fled outbreaks of fighting broke out in the streets around St Peter's Field, between people from the crowd and the military. Jolliffe himself tried to rescue a private from his regiment who was seriously injured and arranged to get wounded soldiers to Manchester Infirmary. The immediate aftermath of the noisy chaos was a period of eerie calm in the city. *'For some time the Town was patrolled by the Troops; the streets being nearly empty, and the shops for the most part closed'*. However, in the evening there was renewed violence in the New Cross district, where a picket of Hussars were harassed by an angry mob who were throwing stones. This resulted in the reading of the Riot Act, after which the soldiers opened fire, almost certainly killing and injuring further people.

Jolliffe then describes visiting the infirmary the next day saying *'I saw there from twelve to twenty severe cases of sabre wounds; many more persons that were severely crushed; and among these two women who appeared not likely to recover; one man was in a dying state from a gunshot wound in the head; another had had his leg amputated.'*

Jolliffe's descriptions bring home the fact that at the heart of Peterloo was a human tragedy. People died and suffered life changing injuries that day. In the following year Hunt and other leading radicals were tried at York Assizes. Hunt was sentenced to 30 months imprisonment in Ilchester Gaol, providing a further Somerset link with the events of Peterloo. Radical unrest continued in the months that followed, before being severely limited by the repressive Six Acts which were passed at the end of 1819. Peterloo led to emotive responses on all sides, whether it is viewed as an essential response to a repressive elite or a seditious and blasphemous gathering. What William Jolliffe's letter demonstrates is that for those caught up in the actual events it was a violent, terrifying and dramatic day which they never forgot.

Janet Tall



A Notorious Taunton Family: Train Robberies and the Bermondsey Horror

In the later 19th century the murderers Frederick and Maria Manning were still remembered in Taunton and buildings linked with them were pointed out to visitors. It was a sensational story at the time as hanging a married couple together was an extremely rare event but even then people took more interest in her than in him. As soon as the crime was publicised Taunton people remembered that she was 'notorious for her coarse language, fiendish violence and savagely disgusting conduct', which seems unlikely in a ladies maid to the aristocracy. However, the same article earnestly assured readers that the couple had embarked on the *Victoria* steamer to New York but that a government steamer had been dispatched to detain them!



Maria was born Marie de Roux in Switzerland and entered domestic service in England as maid to a succession of aristocratic ladies. On 27 May 1847 she married publican Frederick George Manning at St James's Church, Piccadilly, despite having been courting a wealthy retired docks' customs officer Patrick O'Connor. It is not clear how she met Frederick and she still met her old lover after her marriage.

O'Connor's money was undeniably an attraction and the Mannings arranged his murder and disposal at their home in Bermondsey in 1849 before running away with his securities, collected from his lodgings, she to Scotland and he to Jersey. It is difficult to imagine how they thought they could get away with it. They were caught, tried and hanged on the roof of Horsemonger Lane Prison. Charles Dickens was in the crowd, he deplored the behaviour and Maria seems to have inspired his character Hortense in *Bleak House*. She continues to arouse interest long after her husband and fellow murderer has been largely forgotten. Indeed she got an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* but he did not. She was also cast in ceramic as a Staffordshire figurine.



Frederick George Manning was born on 22 March 1821, although he later said he was born on the 16 April, and baptised at Taunton St Mary's church on 12 April 1821, the youngest of the children of Joseph and Blanch; his eldest sister was already married. Joseph Manning, from Ilminster, was a soldier and was posted all over the country including Ireland but by 1816 he had settled in Taunton and was a sergeant in the First Somerset militia. Presumably it was on a posting that he met Blanch Ellis. They married at Madron in Cornwall in April 1799 and their first child Elizabeth was born the following April at Combe St Nicholas and baptised in August 1800 at Ilminster. She was followed by Sarah baptised in Bridgwater in 1803, Charles in Sussex in 1806, Joseph Henry at Portsea in 1808, Ann at Devonport Wesleyan Chapel in 1810, Edmund and James (born in Ireland), at Taunton St Mary in 1816, Harriet in 1817 and finally Frederick. The family first settled in Silver Street but later moved to Magdalene Lane and to North Street.

By the 1830s Joseph and his son Charles, a cabinet maker who predeceased him, leased the Taunton market tolls, they also leased turnpike tolls. In 1835 Joseph was paid £3 for erecting the hustings in the market place. By 1841 the family had split up with Joseph living with Charles and his wife Jane in North Street in Taunton St Mary where father and son worked as confectioners, but also held the Bear Inn. Blanch, apparently managing the tolls, lived in North Town with James, Harriet and Frederick, assisted by a young servant boy; the other children had already left home. James was a gilder, Harriet a milliner and Frederick a painter or carver, presumably with the coachbuilder Mr Reeves of North Street. He appears to have been entered in the census twice, once by his mother and also by local innkeeper John Hellier. Joseph was buried on 24 September 1845 aged 68. Blanch was buried on 23 June 1848 aged 72. Thus both parents were spared the horror of their son's end although his siblings must have suffered.

In the mid 1840s Frederick went to work for the Great Western Railway as a guard and there were several train robberies. The men convicted in 1847 were said to be valets assisted by unnamed railway employees. Frederick was said to have inherited £400 from his father and received a retainer from his father's regiment. It was suggested he wanted a government post and Maria's noble contacts would be useful.



Frederick Manning

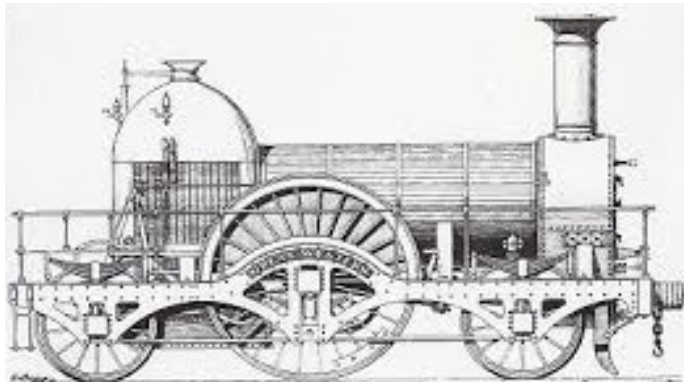
After they were married Frederick brought his new wife back to Taunton where he was said to have planned further train robberies with young men like Edward Nightingale and Henry Poole, another discharged mail train guard who had set himself up in an expensive house in Exeter. Frederick's brother Edmund, a messenger at the Board of Trade, was also implicated. Maria is said to have anonymously reported the plans but later denied it. As the Mannings were never charged with robbery what was said in the press cannot be verified.

In January 1848 £1,500 in gold and silver coin was dispatched as an ordinary parcel from Paddington to Badcock's Bank, Taunton but before the train reached Bristol the money had been stolen. The guards were suspected, no evidence was found but they were dismissed. Both took leases of expensive inns. One was Frederick Manning, lessee of the White Hart on Fore Street, one of Taunton's more important inns.

However, Frederick may have felt it prudent to leave Taunton for London before any further robberies were carried out. In October 1848 he had taken a lease of the Old King John's Head, Mansfield, now Whiston, Street off the Kingsland Road in East London.

On 1 January 1849 a mail train was robbed between stops at Bridgwater and Bristol, which could only have been done by first-class passengers in the carriage adjoining the mail making their way along the wooden running board and steps of the moving train. The mail trains at that date comprised two second class carriages behind the locomotive, a travelling post office, an unstaffed post office tender and a first class carriage.

Valuable items such as securities and jewellery were taken and the bags tied up with new string, the special sealed post office strings having been cut. The railway company realising their staff or ex-staff were involved had prevented news of earlier robberies getting out and warned train crews to be vigilant. The next down mail had a railway director, two post office officials and a police superintendent on board. Thus it was that Nightingale and Poole were caught when they repeated the crime. The guard checked the mail at Bridgwater and discovered that it had been tampered with since leaving Bristol. A search of the men's compartment at Taunton revealed packets stolen from the mailbags under their seats. Masks and a hook, for moving down the outside of the train were also found. They were taken to Exeter and committed to trial. In March they were convicted and sentenced to 15 years transportation but apparently they never implicated anyone else.



Frederick Manning meanwhile had given up the London public house and was working as a 'town traveller' when he and Maria moved into 3 Miniver Place, Bermondsey in June 1849. Perhaps he needed money when he agreed with his wife to murder retired customs gauger Patrick O'Connor on 8 August. They fled separately but soon descriptions of the pair went out. Frederick then 35 was described as stout with a bloated face, of medium height with fair hair, sandy whiskers and pale blue eyes. He was caught in Jersey, it was said because of his addiction to brandy, and hanged with his wife in a blaze of publicity on 13 November 1849 at Horsemonger Lane Prison, where he was buried.

Mary Siraut

Nuggets from VCH Research

A priest in war time: the diary of the Revd Richard Iles 1942—1944

Canon Richard Iles, parish priest of St George's, Taunton, kept a relatively detailed diary, one volume of which was preserved among the church records. He wrote variously in Latin and Italian as well as English, although he did not have Latin words for 'golf' or 'blackout'! As well as memoranda on the weather, the day's feast and clerical and community duties, there are many comments on the progress of the war, Churchill's speeches and the military camps and hospitals, which he visited regularly. He loved bridge, often visiting the convent to play, and golf, playing regularly with the Congregational minister from Paul's Meeting and Provost Charles Davey, the convent chaplain, and at least once with a Methodist minister.

He cycled widely using the car rarely. He visited the American Hospital at Musgrove Park and the Italian prisoners of war, celebrated mass at Norton camp, visited soldiers at Sherford Camp and said Sunday mass at Culmhead and at the asylum. At least once a year he took a holiday at the home of his elderly parents near Swindon and often called on his sister Dorothy who was a nun at the Taunton convent. There was also a lot of letter writing and balancing of accounts and the terrifying prospect of an episcopal visitation! Space does not permit more than a few crumbs from this fascinating glimpse into parish life during the Second World War.

13 Oct. 1942 "Visited the American Hospital for the purpose of giving Holy Communion to some of the sick troops. Perfect Autumn day and cycled to Bridgwater and back before lunch"

15 Oct. 1942 "Spent much of the day on the cycle visiting the outlying districts of my parish where people had been victims of dangerous raids. I was on duty firewatching for the night."

11 Nov. 1942 "No celebration of Armistice day apart from the selling of 'Popies' [sic] which were as conspicuous as ever...Church bells may ring on Sunday for victory in Egypt. Unfortunately mine are in need of repair and so will be silent alas."



St George's church, Taunton

24 Jan. 1943 "Day of exercises by Civil Defence and ARP in preparation for Invasion, consequently congregation not so good at mass. On my return from Culmhead I was only requested to produce my Identity Card."

29 Jan. 1943 "Air activity in the evening and a few bombs."

4 Feb. 1943 "Cycled to Bishops Lydeard to find a person whom a correspondent from Trinidad wanted to know of after 25 years. Found the house without much difficulty"

5 Feb. 1943 "Churchill in Tripoli. Call from Prisoners Camp 1st conversation over telephone in Italian for ages."

26 Feb. 1943 "Mr Davies my golfing acquaintance for 15 years laid to rest... because of his merits and good faith will go straight to heaven".
[Congregational minister at Paul Street]

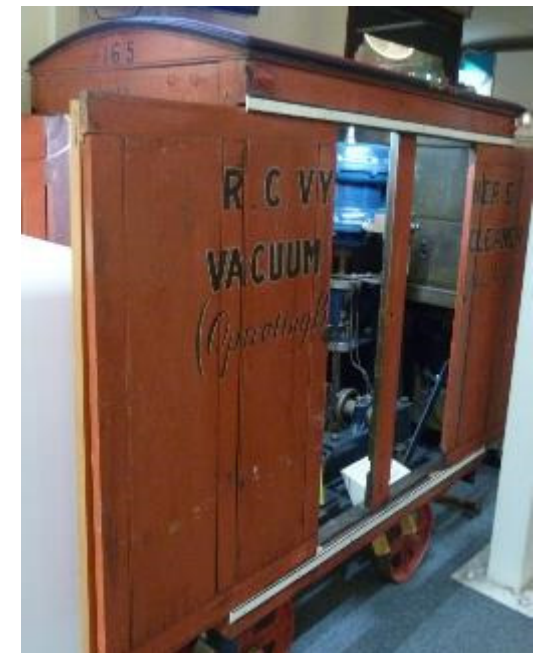
2 April 1943 "Started to clean altar as a Lenten penance and to overcome the drowsiness of after dinner caused by late evenings with fire watchers."

18 May 1943 "Continuance of summer weather, one felt safe in casting a 'clout'. Most of the news is devoted to the enormous damage caused by the breaking of the German dams, flooding caused loss of life. Alert at 2.30 a.m. witnessed from the tower the searchlights focussed on a plane whether British or Foreign was not known. Sharp raid on Cardiff."

4 June 1943 "Visit from Italian Priest and Capitano from Prisoners camp. Under escort of a soldier who left them with me for 2 hours. Managed to practice a little Italian."

16 Sep. 1943 "More church cleaning. Visit to searchlights at Travellers Rest. Prisoners camp to arrange about Bishop's visit for confirmation, long chat with the Italian padre who showed me the chapel."

22 Sep. 1943 "Hayes's old men cleaned down the clerestorey windows and upper walls of the church in preparation for the Bishop's visit. Nothing had been done in this respect since the London Cleaning Co with vacuum cleaner gave the Church a thorough clean about 1933."



Commercial vacuum cleaner

Amberley museum

24 Sep. 1943 "Convoy of army men spent night in Hall, precarious position spending nights anywhere & begging food – part of the war effort."

7 Oct. 1943 "Spent some 4 hours in garden weeding in preparation for Bishop's visit."

9 Oct. 1943 "I have never seen the premises so free from weeds, lawns cut & some late flowers to cheer up the surroundings."

10 Oct. 1943 "Bishop arrived at 3.15 from Chard, Church full to welcome him and 46 candidates for Confirmation including 10 adults. Bishop in good form although appearing rather tired after strenuous mornings work saying mass for Irish workers at Ilton Camp then proceeding to Chard for Confirmation."

27 Oct. 1943 "Motored to Culmhead & Churchstanton to make arrangements about a service in the possible absence of the Colonel. Found American troops in possession of Tricky Warren Camp. It is said that there are now two & half million in the country."

31 Oct. 1943 "Celebrated the 8 Mass & Culmhead – returned just before 11 Mass to find that the American troops about 138 had almost taken possession of St Georges....They came in lorries from Stapley Camp where as yet there was no Chaplain."

19 Nov. 1943 "Meeting of Ministry of Information - question of 3000 people to be evacuated from Kingsbridge and Strete brought up."

24 Dec. 1943 "Turkey arrived from McFisheries much to pleasure of HK [housekeeper]."

31 Dec. 1943 "Firewatching to see the New Year in – very quiet compared with normal times."

4 Jan. 1944 "Xmas Children's party -Col Walmesley supplied duties of Father Xmas -owing to American gifts children had a good time."

26 Jan. 1944 "Woodward & I swept chimney in front room & left brush in the chimney!! W designed scheme to attach a hook to the top of the pole this produced the desired effect & brush came down. Visited searchlights at Durston & Crowcombe."

28 Mar. 1944 "Raid on Bristol last night so kept up till 1 am one plane was brought down at Cheddon – no one injured except Pilot. Wreckage scattered in all directions."

15 Apr. 1944 "American marriages source of anxiety and occupation. American chaplains will not marry their soldiers, I think the outlook for the wife is very doubtful. Will they be welcome when they return to the states after the war."

5 June 1944 "Great number of aeroplanes about at night preparing for the invasion of the Continent in the morning. Wonderful reception on the wireless of the enthusiasm at the allied entrance to Rome."

6 June 1944 "Very quiet travelling – everyone anxiously expecting news"

4 July 1944 "Went to Bristol by early train -Chapter meeting...Crowded train on my return owing to people coming from London to escape flying bombs."

23 Aug. 1944 "Great was news of the liberation of Paris from Nazi tyranny after 4 ½ years"

7 Sep. 1944 "Welcome home news – relaxation of blackout, fire watching & Home Guard"

Mary Siraut

Firewatcher's shelter

Bristol M Shed



Quantock Landscapes to be Celebrated

After four years of development the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (QLPS) has been awarded a £1.8m National Lottery grant by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. With match funding from the National Trust, Friends of Quantock, the Quantock Hills AONB and EDF Energy, the award will allow the £2.6m, five-year scheme to begin delivery to enhance the landscape, natural environment and provide more opportunities for people to engage and enjoy the 200km² scheme area.

The Quantock Hills are a special place. Their designation in 1956 as England's first Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was not only for their particular qualities as a natural environment, but also for their remarkable story of human interaction with nature reaching back many thousands of years.

The scheme, developed by the Quantock Hills AONB Service in partnership with South West Heritage Trust, Friends of Quantock and many others, aims to inspire the local communities to learn from the centuries of landscape development on the Quantock Hills and undertake a wide range of projects providing resilience and protection of the landscape into the future.



Archaeological excavation on Cothelstone Hill in 2015



The scheme will deliver a number of projects which aim to work together to:

Inspire - engage people in understanding the landscape, its cultural influence and work with communities to understand the pressures and opportunities into the future.

Live - undertake physical works to conserve and enhance the landscape and heritage assets of the Quantock Hills.

Learn - increase knowledge of the Quantock Hills and the role of the estates in the formation of its landscapes.

Staff from the South West Heritage Trust will be working on a range of projects looking at the history and development of the historic estate around the Quantocks, cataloguing archive collections and unlocking some of the hidden history in the archives. In addition, several community archaeology projects will take place on Cothelstone Hill and in several villages around the Quantocks.

Bob Croft



Forthcoming Events

Join us for a tour of Cleeve Abbey with James Bond on the 2 May 2020. Details will be circulated nearer the time.

We are also hoping to visit a country house not normally open to the public in the summer and we will of course have our annual lecture in the autumn. This year we are pleased to announce that it will be given by Professor Mark Stoyle who will speak about the impact of the English Civil War on Somerset. Further details will be publicised nearer the time.

Notices of all events will be sent to subscribers to this newsletter.

Please Support Us

Further work is entirely dependent on public generosity. If you would like to support the future work of the Somerset VCH please consider making a donation or legacy to the **Somerset County History Trust** [Registered Charity Number 1161263]. For more information contact:

Victoria County History of Somerset, Somerset Heritage Centre, Brunel Way, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton, TA2 6SF
vch@swheritage.org.uk

Please pass this newsletter on to others. If you are not on our mailing list and would like to receive future copies of the newsletter, please let us know by contacting us at vch@swheritage.org.uk

Historic Images of Somerset



Pyrland Hall, Taunton St James, in 1944.

SWHT

It has hardly changed since including the heavy creeper covering! Lying in the far north-west of the parish of St James it retains its country-house setting although the built-up area is now only a field away.

Pyrland Hall was built in the mid-18th century for Sir William Yea and was notorious for a case of robbery in 1789 when three people were accused of stealing silver tankards, cheese and sheep. After the Yeas left it passed through many hands.

During the Second World War there was a camp in the grounds, occupied in 1946 by ten homeless families. In September 1947 Pyrland Hall was used to house 16 nurses on their preliminary three months training but later Lyngford House was used and the fire brigade considered buying Pyrland Hall.

The executors of the last owner put it up for auction in 1951 and it was sold to Kings College for £10,000 for use as a preparatory and junior school, leaving the main site for boys over 13. In 1955 there were 120 boys at Pyrland House. By 1977 there were 174. In 1987 it became King's Hall, a boarding and day school for boys and girls aged 4 to 13, and now has c. 320 pupils.