

**Journal of  
FRODSHAM AND DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Issue No. 46 December 2016**

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Front cover picture:

**Shakespeare Tree Stratford**

2016 was the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakespeare's death. Shakespeare's last home was New Place, Stratford, a high status residence which he bought in 1597. In 1759 the eccentric Rev. Francis Gastrell, a former Bishop of Chester, destroyed the last house standing and reputedly Shakespeare's mulberry tree, but, much of Shakespeare's estate survived. In August 2016 a new garden, with commissioned sculptures, opened to the public. This striking Bronze by Jill Berelowitz titled *His Mind's Eye* is one of them.

## CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

**President: Mrs Joan Douglas**

**Officers:**

Mr Brian Dykes, Chairman; Dr Kath Gee, Hon.Sec.; Mr David Fletcher, Hon.Treasurer.

**Committee:**

Mrs Margaret Dodd, Membership Secretary; Mrs Betty Wakefield, Programme Secretary; Mr Andrew Faraday; Mr Brian Keeble; Mrs Pam Keeble; Mrs Heather Powling; Mrs Beryl Wainwright; Mr Tony Wakefield.

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Dear Members and Friends,

We are pleased to present you with our History Journal for 2016. My grateful thanks go to the people who have enabled this to be produced, those who have contributed articles and photographs and the hard-working compilers/editors who have made this an interesting and topical Journal.

During 2016 we have remembered several momentous historical anniversaries including Shakespeare's death on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 400 years ago. Our front cover picture and caption draw your attention to the opening of a new tourist attraction in Stratford: the Garden at Shakespeare's last home, and, a tenuous Cheshire link to New Place, courtesy of Rev. Gaskell, almost 150 years later...

On 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 many places across the UK marked the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme. And, at the same time, the British and French Governments jointly hosted a significantly larger commemoration at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Thiepval Memorial, in Northern France, in remembrance of the tens of thousands who tragically lost their lives in this First World War battle that raged for four months.

In early September 1666 the Great Fire of London burnt for five days and destroyed the largely timber-framed city and more than 80 of its churches. 51, plus St Paul's, were subsequently rebuilt in stone to the designs of Christopher Wren, but, only 13 presently survive in their original form.

We all know the Battle of Hastings was fought on 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1066, but did you know that English Heritage organised a major re-enactment and a programme of related family events at Battle Abbey for the weekend 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> October, 2016; and, that the impact of the Norman invasion is still hotly debated by historians today?

Back in Frodsham, my thanks go to several committee and Society members: to Betty Wakefield for her interesting programme of speakers in 2016 and for hosting our committee meetings; to Pam and Brian Keeble for their work in digitising local historic images and making them available on the website – [frodshamhistoricimages.co.uk](http://frodshamhistoricimages.co.uk); to Kath Gee for her secretarial, publicity and editorial role as well as for representing the Society on the Executive Committee of the Cheshire Local History Association, and, with Heather Powling, on the West Cheshire Heritage Forum; to Kath Hewitt who actively manages our Archive and has created a dedicated website for it – [frodhistoryarchives.co.uk](http://frodhistoryarchives.co.uk). Kath has mounted several exhibitions of artefacts at various events and locations in the district, most recently the Harvest of Memories in Frodsham Methodist Church.

Brian Dykes

## THE DRILL HALL, FRODSHAM

Arthur R Smith

The Drill Hall is adjacent to the Yuet Ben Restaurant on Main Street, Frodsham. At the entrance is a stone commemorative archway. The hall was built in 1899 during the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa. The British governed a large part of South Africa that was known as the Cape Colony and the Boers (descendants of Dutch settlers) had established their own independent republic to the north. After numerous border disputes, fighting broke out in October 1899. The Boer farmers were well-armed and good horsemen and began to inflict heavy losses on the British forces. Soon there was a drive for more recruitment and better training of soldiers in England. This Drill Hall, like many more in other towns in England, was built in response to this need. At the time of its opening in 1889, the Drill Hall became the home of the Frodsham (1) Company of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Volunteer Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment. However the entrance was not very imposing and so in testimony to the local volunteers who fought in the Boer War, it was decided in November 1900 to erect an ornamental archway at an estimated cost of £100.00. Mr John Palmer, builder and quarry owner of Frodsham, carried out the construction work.



*The 2<sup>nd</sup> Cheshire Volunteers with their band at the Drill Hall c.1900 – Image  
FD002219*

The commemorative archway was built at the bequest of Mrs Julia Garratt of Stapleton House, Frodsham, whose son, Major George H Garratt, had served with the Cheshire Regiment in South Africa, commanding the 7<sup>th</sup> Cheshire Rifle Volunteers.



*Major George H. Garratt c.1914 – Image FDN1840*

On each side of the Drill Hall arch are the county arms, the Cheshire Sheafs and in the centre the Prince of Wales Feathers, together with the name of the company.



*Photograph of the Archway 2016*

The archway bears the following abbreviated inscription on the stonework:

**1 COMPANY 2<sup>nd</sup> EC VB CR**

In the 1900s the Drill Hall became a place for many public functions to be held. When it was not needed for military purposes, this large hall was ideal for public meetings, balls and concerts. In November 1911 the Women's Suffrage Movement held a well-attended meeting where Lady Balfour and two other speakers gave addresses in which they spoke eloquently in favour of votes for women. The Vicar of Frodsham, Canon Henry Blogg, had been invited to chair the meeting. Tragically, in the final part of the meeting, as he was finishing his speech in which he congratulated the speakers on their fine contributions, he collapsed and died.



*The decorations in place and the tables set in the Drill Hall for the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of George V in 1935.*

Ref: Numbered images are from [frodshamhistoricimages.co.uk](http://frodshamhistoricimages.co.uk)

**Editors' note:**

Despite being regularly used by the community for social activities, badminton and country dancing, in 1975 planning permission was approved which involved the demolition of the Drill Hall. Thankfully this was not implemented and the Drill Hall is presently owned and managed by the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association. It is now the home of the No 5 Detachment (Queen's Own Yeomanry), part of Messines Company, Cheshire Army Cadet Force.

Behind the Grade II Listed military archway, the building is showing signs of wear and tear. However about 25 young people aged from 12½ -18 meet there on Monday and Thursday evenings to learn, experience challenges and have fun with the Army Cadets.

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## CHANCELLORSVILLE FREEHOLD GOLD MINING COMPANY, FRODSHAM BRIDGE

Sue Lorimer

Who would have guessed that when James Pickering closed the Salt Works in 1856, the next occupier of the site would be the first gold crushing and extraction plant in the country!

The Chancellorsville Freehold Gold Mining Company was formed in 1853. The company had a 439 acre holding in Virginia, where gold speculation had begun about 1804. The aim was to extract gold and silver from the quartz removed from their mine in Orange County. However the cost of fuel and labour for the extraction process in America was always going to be prohibitive so the plan was to ship the ore to England for processing.

Initial tests indicated a yield of at least 5 oz. of gold per ton of quartz, but to confirm their findings and thereby increase the value of the company, in July 1855 they shipped 100 tons of ore, 433 barrels, to Ipswich for testing in England. By the time the "Quickstep" docked in October a suitable processing plant had not been found.

The site of the old Salt Works at Frodsham Bridge proved ideal. It had a wharf on the Weaver, access to coal supplies and a railway station nearby. During 1856/7 ore was shipped to the Mersey as ballast on American Traders and then on to barges to the site, where it was crushed and the gold extracted using mercury. They also took some ore from Wales and plans were in place to import from Australia. National newspapers carried the story. For example, the Leicester Chronical June 10<sup>th</sup> 1857 records:

*"Frodsham, the site of the company's works, is rather an out-of-the-way place, a long, lazy looking town, with no particular interest in itself, or apparently in anything else either. A third crow would be a source of excitement, and under the circumstances the new gold works form the staple of comment and conversation throughout this little town."*

In June 1857 several prominent scientists, including the assayer of the Royal Mint, witnessed the test on ore from Virginia. 1 oz. 7 pennyweights and 7 grains of gold were extracted from one ton of quartz. This appeared to be a satisfactory result justifying the expense of shipping the ore from Virginia, albeit a relatively cheap form of transport. Things did not work out however, as in December 1857 the company sold off their mercury supplies and equipment in Frodsham and the company appears to have folded. One of their directors, an insurance broker and dealer in mining shares, was declared bankrupt the following year and a new company Anglican Smelting, Reduction and Coal Company allowed shareholders of Chancellorsville Freehold Gold Mining Company to transfer their holdings to them, at a small price.

Had the Chancellorsville Company succeeded the Frodsham operation would have been affected because gold production stopped in Virginia during the American Civil War. The Battle of Chancellorsville was one of the major battles of the war and was where “Stonewall” Jackson received his mortal wound. The home of the Chancellor family “Chancellorsville” was used as the H.Q. by first the Confederate and then the Union armies whilst the family continued to live there.

Later on, in the early 1860s, the Salt Works was leased by Messrs. Forbes McKenzie & Co, foreign fruiterers from Liverpool, who produced Spanish Liquorice on the site, another of the strange activities undertaken at Frodsham Bridge.

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### **Believe it or not!!**

The Stamford Mercury of 8<sup>th</sup> May 1789 told of the marriage at Overton of Thomas Leech, aged 74 and Miss Jenny Gilbert, aged 16, both of Alvanley. Thomas had 33 grandchildren living at the time, many of them older than their grandmother. “If the minds of this couple are as happily united as their years, what a blessed pair they must be.”

*St Laurence Church records show Thomas Leech marrying Jane Gilbert on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1789 by Banns. A Thomas and Jane Leech of Alvanley had 4 children christened at the Parish Church between the years 1791 and 1799, and, Thomas Leech of Alvanley, aged 96, was buried there on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1818. A Jane Leech, of Alvanley died in April 1814, aged 63. If this is the same person the papers had the age very wrong!*

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### **Believe it or not!!**

In August 1792, the Bath Chronicle reported the marriage of Joseph Basnett, of Alvanley, aged 86 and Mrs Ray aged 22, at Overton, after a courtship of 3 days.

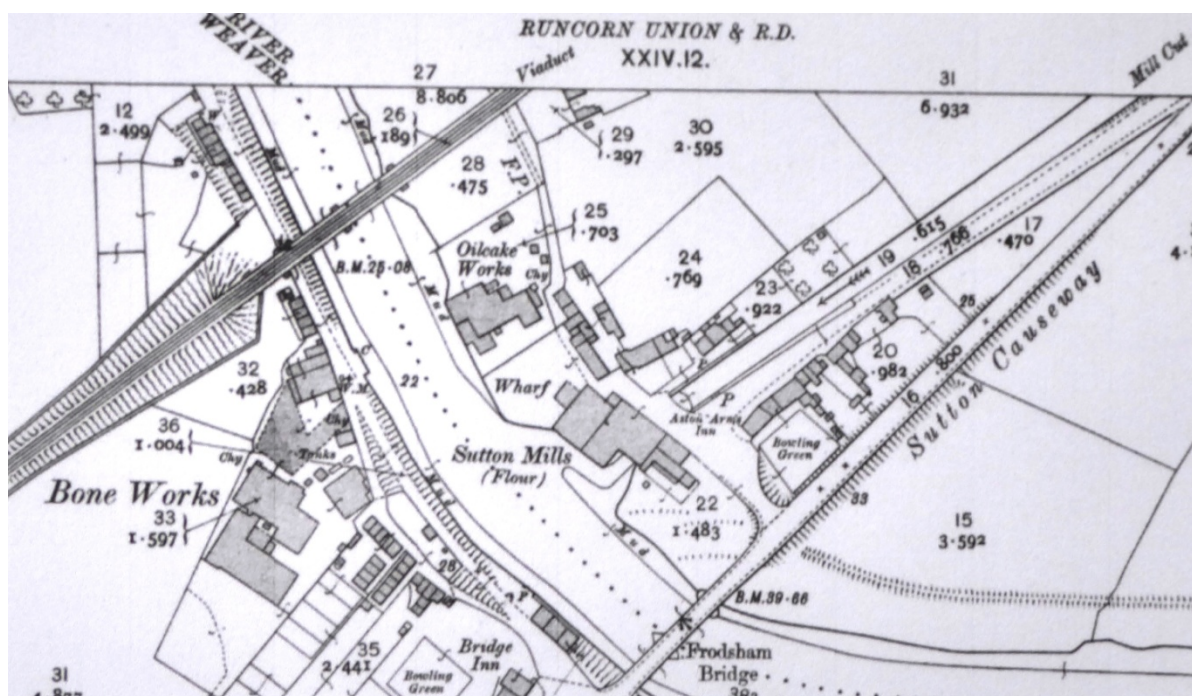
*Church records confirm that Joseph, a widower, married Mary Ray, a widow of Alvanley, on 30th July 1792, by licence. Joseph was a butcher who owned a farm and land in Alvanley. Joseph died circa 1801 and the executors of his will were Samuel Noden and Joseph Griffiths. However there is no trace of the will or the registration of his birth or death.*

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## REMINISCENCES - MILL LANE IN THE LATE 1940s

Harry Leather

The first visit to my grandparents home in Mill Lane, Frodsham was when I was six. I arrived with my mother on a green Crossville bus and we got off opposite the Bridge Inn. We had brought jam tarts in a tea-towel covered basket. Walking over the white bridge and turning down into Mill Lane past the Aston Arms I apparently screamed when Bert Nicholls' huge and menacing guard dog made it clear that he was the hunter and I was the prey.



*OS 25 inch map, 1911 edition, Frodsham Bridge area. Mill Lane runs parallel to Mill Cut from Sutton Mills*

The smell from the Mill was quite strong, a soft farmyard straw and hay smell, but not unpleasant. A flat backed truck was parked next to the wall from which a large shiny metal chute projected. All at once a large sack came down the chute expertly taken up by a muscular man who deftly avoided being thumped off the lorry and stacked it on a pile that was growing near the cab.

My mother pointed out a big metal water pump outside the cottages on the other side of the road where several pints of milk were cooling in a large sink under a trickle from the pump. She told me this was where she collected water before mains water came to Mill Lane.

My grandparent's cottage was the second one after the pub and still has the cobbles outside that I remember. Inside the front room was a cooking range that seemed to occupy the whole wall and it had a fire blazing away. My kindly grandmother welcomed us in and swung a black kettle over the flames - in that order. She was delighted with the tarts. Soon tea was served with a mug of water for me. In the next room there was a harmonium and I was allowed to pump the pedals whilst my grandmother picked out a tune.

I asked to go to the toilet and was taken down the garden past rows of carrots, beans, potatoes and leeks to a brick building with a wooden blue door in the centre of which was a large kite shaped hole in its middle. I wasn't sure which of the three circular wooden lids to



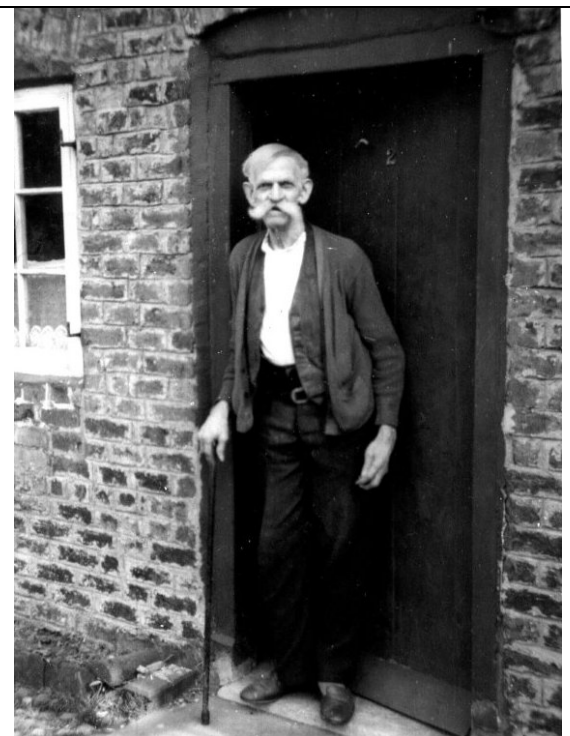
lift so I chose the nearest one, I immediately wished I had not and conducted my ablutions in record time, in fact, for the length of one gaspingly held breath.

We had a little while before our bus came so we walked to the end of Mill Lane. The last building held Bert Nicholls' cow - a heavy Friesian lying on a bed of straw chewing at some hay. We looked into the brook which ran slowly alongside of the lane and my mother told me it used to power a water wheel in the mill before electricity arrived.

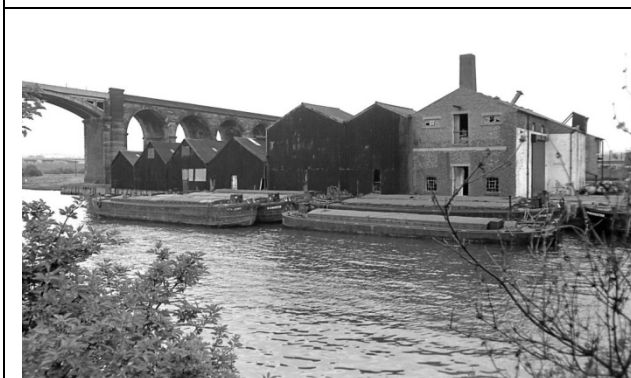
A little further from the junction with the A56 We came across a large black and white television screen which just then started to flash its message "BRIDGE CLOSING". We had plenty of time to stroll back to the bus stop and soon our bus arrived to take us back to our home in Runcorn where we had a gas cooker, a real flushing toilet and a 9 inch Pye television with moving pictures on its one channel (with just the test card to watch between 6.00pm and 7.00 pm).



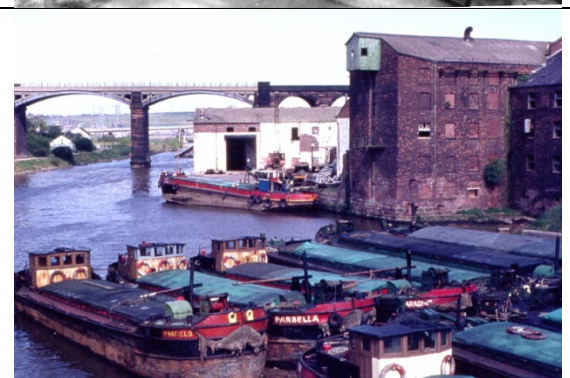
Above – Millstones removed from Frodsham Mill



Right – Grandfather, Richard Tannant c.78 years old in c.1960. He is outside no.2 Mill Lane between the Nursery and the Garden Centre. The cobbles, bottom left on the photograph, are still there today.



Barges moored after carrying grain across the Mersey, up the Manchester Ship Canal and into the Weaver from Seaforth Docks c.1974. From here, the grain was transported by road to the Kelloggs factory in Manchester.



Barges 'in storage' at Frodsham Bridge – they were made redundant by the MSC Bridgewater Dept and awaiting new owners c.1974. Note Frodsham Mill on the Sutton bank of the River Weaver.

## ARCHIVAL NEWS 2016

Kath Hewitt

For the 2014 and 2015 Journals, I felt that it was very important to air documents from the archives which recorded and commemorated the actions of Frodsham men and women during WW1 and WW2. However, over this time I have answered 69 specific enquiries from the public and so a very busy service continues. From the many enquiries, I report only some of the more interesting and curious.

For example, it was most unusual to receive a telephone enquiry on a Sunday morning from Broadstairs in Kent but the following conversation and later emails from Mike Ellis, proved very interesting. Mike is an enthusiastic browser and collector of:

*"... all sorts of postcards from the 1910 /1936 period, and where they have been sent somewhere interesting, as in this case, I like to write them up in as much detail as I can. So, my queries to you are: in 1911 was Norley Hall a large country house / farmhouse? Does it still exist, and if not, what has taken its place? Can you tell me about C. Bell Esq - was he the owner, or tenant - landed gentry or working man?"*



The internet provided basic information about Norley Hall but it was a chance remark amongst friends which proved so useful. Coincidence played its part when having mentioned that I had seen the Hall close to for the first time, I was later given the 2014 Issue of the Norley News Magazine with its leading article about the Norley Hall Estate and Charles Bell Esq! Once I had tracked down the author, retired farmer Mr. David Gadd of Norley, I found that he was very knowledgeable about the history of the estate and keen to chat at length about Mike's mysterious, C. Bell Esq.

Rather than summarise his article about Norley Hall and Charles Bell, I gained his permission to reproduce the article (as written by David) for our Journal and which you will find following this article. The information was finally emailed to a delighted Mike Ellis. The magazine, now in the archives, has four pages of beautiful old photographs illustrating the extensive estate of Norley Hall.

Yet another enquiry, similar in nature to Mike Ellis's, was most intriguing...

Brian Breckie emailed to ask about Heathercliff House Hotel, Manley Road, Frodsham, where he had spent an “enchanted” holiday many years ago, and about a Queen who had once lived there. This is a well known local story but just how true is it? Coincidence played its part once again.



*Photo taken about 1982*

Heathercliff, is a Victorian country house, once owned by a Liverpool businessman named Smith, who extended the house, developed the gardens and 10 acres of woodland between 1905 and 1908. Some time after 1920 it was bought by a Liverpool stock broker, Major Matthew Steele.

By the 1950s it was owned by Richard (Dick) Roberts, described as a delightful man, who bought several houses in the area including the neglected Heathercliff, which he split into two and rented out half.

In 1982 his son, Dr John Roberts, inherited the house and *“spent considerable time, effort and money restoring it from a near wreck with an overgrown garden to what it had been but adding the ponds to encourage wild life. The grassland was controlled by sheep and the woods restored.”*

In 1989 the house was sold once more and became a Country House Hotel under the ownership of Mike and Sheila Cooksley, hosting amongst others, celebrities and film makers. In 1991 the grounds became the settings for the film “Robin Hood” with Patrick Bergin. The interior of St. Laurence Church was filmed and Frodsham High School was used as a costume and makeup station.

By 2014/15 it was again under new ownership and in the hands of contractors who were restoring it to its original splendour. I was able to wander inside and saw rooms emerging much as the Queen would have seen them. Only a beautiful chandelier remained and an old publicity press cutting about two former residents, Queen Alexandra and the American multimillionaire, John Paul Getty Snr.

So, what of the Queen? What had Frodsham to offer her?

Queen Alexandra of Yugoslavia, a Princess of Greece and Denmark, born on the 25th March 1921, was the widow of King Peter of Yugoslavia. They had married in 1944 but after WW2 the Monarchy was abolished and their penniless, chaotic life style led to her attempted suicide and finally divorce in 1953. King Peter died in 1970 in Denver, USA and was later re-interred in the Royal Cemetery in Serbia.

My next step was to trace anyone who had had contact with the Queen. Phone calls to friends in Frodsham who were able to help, led to contacts in Oxford and finally to London. The Oxford contact, by coincidence, was Ann Moncrieff, whom I had helped with research two years earlier. Her brother, who lived in London, was Dr J. R. L. Roberts - the Dr John Roberts of Frodsham, who had inherited Heathercliff in 1982 and who proved to be the key to the enquiry. She very kindly put me in touch with him. John who had lived in the other half of Heathercliff gave me a brief, if somewhat guarded, outline of Queen Alexandra's residency and sent me photographs of the house, grounds and members of staff covering this time.



The two people who 'oversaw' the Queen's stay were John van Eerde, the project manager and Maxi Spanoudis, his assistant. They were assisted by Jill Roberts, in charge of finances, and Robin Ashworth (well known locally) in charge of Alexandra's supplies. During her stay, John van Eerde drove the Queen around the Cheshire countryside, which she clearly enjoyed. Dr. John Roberts writes:

*"I can make no comment other than to confirm that Her Majesty, stayed at Heathercliff for a short while in 1985. I have spoken to the sub manager at that time who asked me to say that Her Majesty, who beamed when addressed as such, was a very nice lady and enjoyed her short stay in the Cheshire countryside. HM came to Heathercliff because of the need for a tranquil environment and appeared very unhappy to leave"*

Queen Alexandra of Yugoslavia, died in Burgess Hill, West Sussex on the 30th of January 1993 and was re-interred first of all in Tartoi, Greece and finally in the Royal cemetery in Serbia.

My grateful thanks go to Dr John Roberts, Nick Smith, Chris Bushell and Ann Moncrieff for all their invaluable information. A delighted Brian Brockie sent his appreciation for answers to his enquiry.

Moving on!

For those members who do not have a computer to browse the Archive Website, and to refresh members' memories about **The Flower Cottage Discovery**, I include the full article with up-dates and photographs in this Journal.

A Mystery...

Last year, a doctor's leather medical case, found in the loft of a 1929-built house in Sandiway near Chester, was passed to the archives by Kathryn Shingler, a family member. The case had to be dried, shaped and polished being in very poor condition.

The F&DHS committee requested for as much information about it as possible. At this point I should warn you that the following is not for the faint hearted. So at my request, Prof. Martin Hewitt of Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham, was given the only information I had but by using his own knowledge, medical records and so on, the possible identity and history of the case's contents were meticulously researched. His notes, certificates and photographs of the instruments are now in the archives. The doctor's name was thought to be English and living in Sandiway. Martin notes:

*"If we have the correct Dr. English (of 2) he was born in 1881/2, living in Cheshire and listed as a physician (partner) in the 1911 census and is 29; probably just setting out in general practice. So he would be practising from about 1910 through to 1940 - 1945. It would fit in with some of the instruments seen - such as the GP doing spinal taps, surgical procedures (scalpels) and passing bougies. The metal instruments known as 'bougies' are of different diameters - dilators to be inserted into the body tubes one after another, dilating them. At the risk of being indelicate - they were for inserting into the male urethra to overcome any stricture or narrowing (often caused by gonorrhoea). I am surmising that morphine could have been applied topically to numb things. All pre-antibiotic era.*

*Contents of vial listed here are poisonous:*

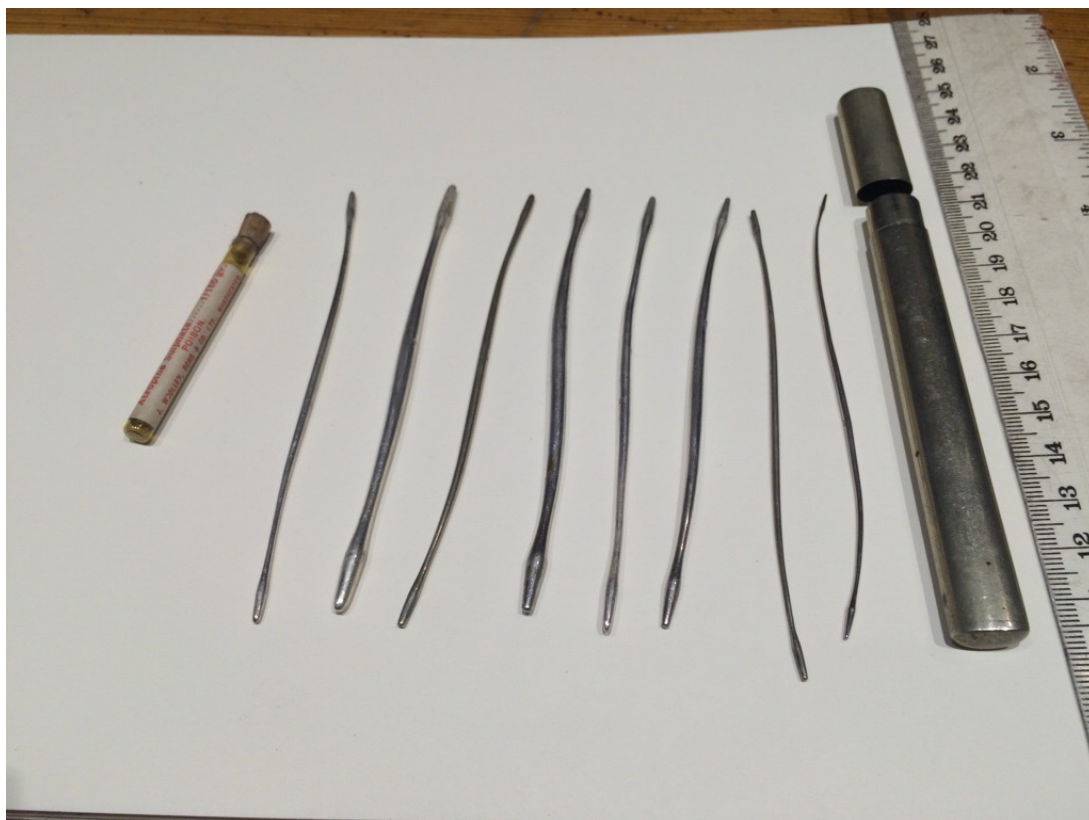
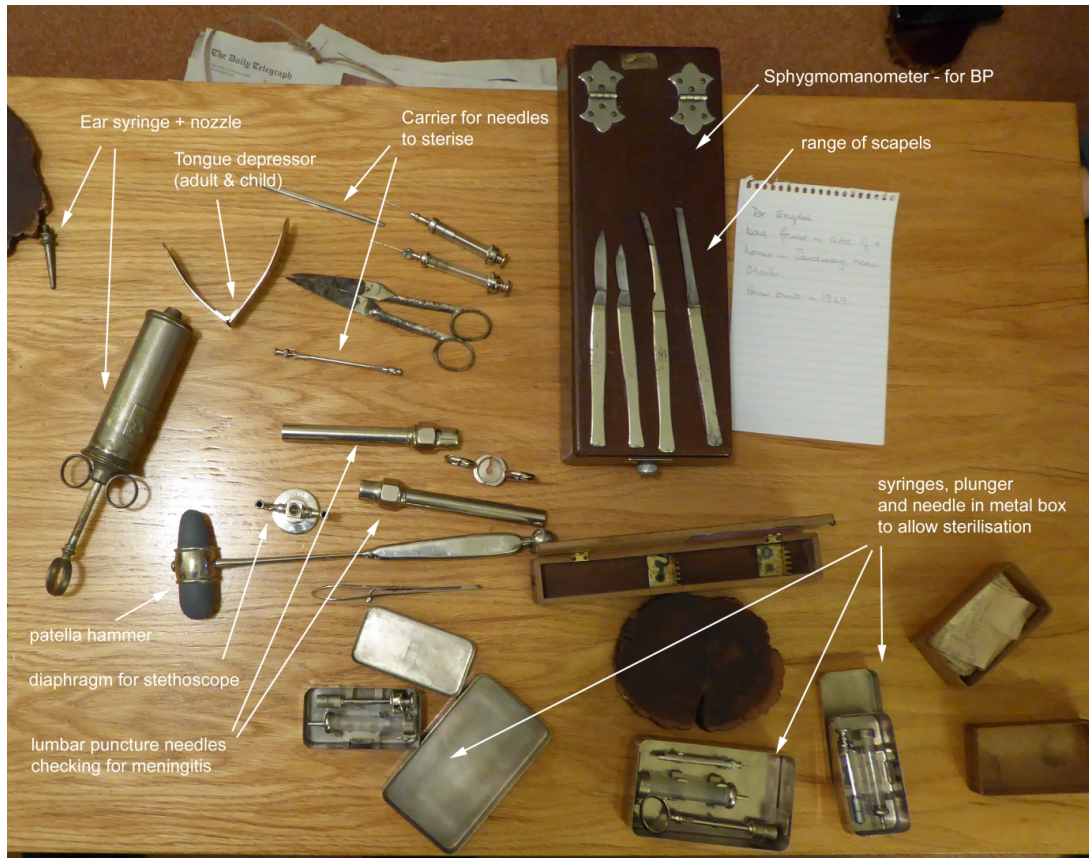
*18 tablets of morphine atropine 1/4 grains; Sulphate 1/160 grains; Hypodermic tablets. Morphine S is for pain. Atropine is an 'anticholinergic' drug and has many effects on the body - as an eye drop it will dilate the pupil - and was used by women to increase attraction by producing big black eyes - plant extract Belladonna (beautiful woman).*

*Morphine and atropine are often given together as an anaesthetic - morphine for pain and sleepiness and atropine to dry secretions. So patients would take an atropine tablet, then have a morphine injection before surgery.*

*If there is medication in the vial you may wish to dispose of it."*

Richard has already disposed of the tablets and the tiny vial is now safe in the case.

My grateful thanks go to Martin for such detailed research in attempting to solve a mystery.



*The bougies, case and vial of poison*

Documents, letters, books, slides and artifacts continue to be donated and I list but a few of the most recent here.

The daughter of Ted Edmundson brought in a box full of her late father's documents. Mr Edmundson contributed articles to the early Journals and wrote widely and in great detail, about Frodsham and its environs. The box contained correspondence from the 1970s covering local conservation, Runcorn New Town, flora, fauna, badger groups and so on. Eighty of his slides of Frodsham have been scanned are now on the website.

Mr Chris Burrow of Kingsley has donated family papers belonging to the late Miss Margaret Blythe including an album, letters, photographs, Church, Civic and Town Council matters - all very interesting indeed.

David Hawkes of Bedford was researching his Warburton family roots and made good use of archive records. Documents were posted to Arthur Smith about Frodsham clock makers, occupations, trades and Norah Bibby.

Allen Wales has loaned a rare baby's gas mask, issued by the Home Office in 1939 - where the baby is placed completely inside, the flap is folded between the legs and an attached pump keeps the oxygen flowing.

Extraordinary records were kept by the late Derrick Hastings Rowley, aged 18, before his call up into the RAF. Three very detailed note books recording:

1. Air Raid charts arranged in - Daily Columns, Times of Warnings, All Clear, Hours & Minutes, 1940 – 1942.
2. Barometer Temperatures & Relative Humidity Tables recording Wind Speeds and Graphs 1941 – 1942, 1943, 1946.
3. Day & Night Weather Reports. Records of flying bombs 1944, 1945.

Post war he owned the Watch Maker & Jewellers in Church Street, Frodsham. Donated by his daughter Elizabeth Rowley.

Apart from travelling around to find half remembered houses and places to find answers for enquiries, I have also exhibited archive items at three more events in the last twelve months and have been booked to speak about the Archives at a meeting of U3A in November.

So many other interesting items have been donated, some absolute gems, and you will find them all listed on the website and database and the paper copies in the pink A4 hardback files in Frodsham Library and at Reception in Castle Park House where you can browse at your leisure. Should you wish to visit the Archive Room, please contact me:

[frodhistoryarchives.co.uk](http://frodhistoryarchives.co.uk); [kath.hewitt@btinternet.com](mailto:kath.hewitt@btinternet.com)

My thanks to everyone who has helped me with information and made life a little easier.

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## DOWNTON ABBEY ON YOUR DOORSTEP - 100 YEARS ON

David Gadd, Low Farm (Norley Estates)



*Picture by Claudia Wild*

Not many people living in Norley will know that on Saturday July 18th 1914 at 2.30pm at the Grosvenor Hotel Chester was offered for sale The Norley Estate: 1,181 acres comprising some 14 farms, 16 cottages, various building plots and Norley Hall - a mansion built in 1500 for the Hall Family, enlarged in 1697 for John Hall, rebuilt in 1782 for William Hall and enlarged again in 1845 for Samuel Woodhouse. [The picture shows] how it looks.

My Family came to Norley in March 1968 when my father took the tenancy of Low Farm. This farm along with Smithy Bank Farm, Fingerpost Farm, Sandy Croft Farm and Town Farm 2 had been purchased by Cheshire County Council to be offered at cheap rents for home coming soldiers from World War 1.

Low Farm was farmed as a dairy farm and my father milked cows up until his untimely death in 1995. The County Council offered us the opportunity to buy and we did, in 1997.

My mother - a district nurse and midwife for 40 years - told a patient about buying the farm and he produced an original sale catalogue from 1914 - his own father had been at the auction. We kept a copy, and that's where my fascination with Norley Hall, Norley Village and life in Norley at the time, began.

Life in Norley Hall pre first world war must have been very good. The 1911 census for Norley Hall shows Charles Bell, his wife, son, daughter and a nephew living there with a butler, three housemaids and a cook. That was just the indoor staff –



there was also a coachman living in the beautiful coach house just off Town Farm Lane, and gardeners living in a gardeners' cottage - to the left as you come out of the rear entrance to the Hall.

Norley at that time was a self contained village, revolving around Norley Hall. The farming model at that time was that the squire retained the Home Farm, which was managed by a bailiff working under his instructions. The Home Farm provided a template for tenant farmers to follow - including best breeds of cattle for milking, which crops to grow, how to rotate these and other good farming practice.

If you were born in Norley around this time you would have gone to the village school built by Samuel Woodhouse. This was originally a Sunday school but as school attendance on a daily basis became law, children attended daily. As you left school you would either be employed by the Hall as a servant, or work on one of the tenants' farms. There were many shops in the village then. One supplied clothes - or livery as it was called - to the two large houses in Norley. A boy was employed to fetch beer for the gentry, while they were fitted out!

Agriculture was the mainstay of the village. Cow Lane was so named because of the number of milking cows that were kept there. Every farm would have made cheese, and cheese rolling competitions took place down Cheese Hill. The competitions were banned in due course – after too many broken bones due to pre-race visits to the Tigers Head?

Samuel Woodhouse was a great benefactor of Norley. He led the Parish Council for many years, building the school and generally fulfilling his duties as the squire of the village very well. His business was as a wine merchant, importing Madeira wine into England.

He sold Norley Hall to Charles Bell in 1900 and [Samuel] appears on the 1911 census at Heatherston Park, Taunton, Somerset. He doesn't appear to have fallen on hard times - the census shows he still kept eight indoor servants including a journeyman/baker.

When he took over the Hall in 1900, Charles Bell appeared in the census as a brewer, maltster, and wine and spirit merchant in Wavertree, Lancashire. The next property listed in the census is Brewery Yard, with the head of household listing Charles Bell as his employer.

No one seems to know what happened to Charles Bell. He went from having what seemed to be a thriving business at the turn of the century when he bought the Hall, to having to sell everything in 1914. One theory is that he was involved in underwriting the insurance for the Titanic, which went down in 1913. Another theory suggests he lost a legal battle with chemical business Brunner Mond. Whatever did happen, he seems to have had to raise a monumental amount of cash in a very short time.

The answer seems to have been the auction at 2.30 on Saturday 18th of July 1914, which changed lives for ever!

On starting to write this article there seemed only one logical place to start, Norley Hall.

As we walked down the drive you can imagine the photographer setting up his camera, a big box on a tripod, black cloth over his head taking the first exposure. In fact we could retrace his steps exactly, one from the drive at Norley Hall, one more central from the front lawn, the next from the back drive looking left of Gardeners Cottage, then rotate right to catch the Paddocks.

The service entrance to the Hall is very impressive - all converted to houses now but you can see the coach house with its massive arched opening where the coaches would have driven through after dropping their guests at the Hall.

The guests would have danced in the ballroom above the service building with its sprung floor specially for dancing. Presumably the drivers would have been entertained and fed in the coachman's lodge or vast kitchens that would have serviced the Hall.

A lot of thought went into planning and building Norley Estate. Norley Hall was lit by methane gas from a plant recycling the animal dung from the farm. There are no two farms or buildings built the same, ingenious features such as underground water tanks storing rain water from the roofs.

Norley Estate was not unique in fact it was quite the norm but I think it's nice to have your very own Downton Abbey right here on your doorstep - all you've got to do is find it!

#### **Editors' note:**

The wine business was established by the Woodhouse family when they lived in Toxteth Park, Liverpool. Three brothers, John, William & Samuel successfully traded as Messrs Woodhouse & Co from the early 1800s. It is reputed that their "Bronte" wine was served to Horatio Nelson's fleet. Samuel bought Norley Hall, but following his death in Marsala, Sicily, his son Samuel, born 1821, inherited the property.

In 1845 the second Samuel Woodhouse had Norley Hall remodelled by a Liverpool architect and 10 years later he commissioned Edward Kemp to design the garden. He enlarged and developed the Norley Hall Estate, provided facilities for the village, became a Magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire. He died at Norley Hall in 1892.

The third Samuel Woodhouse, born 1848, married in Ireland in 1876. The family lived mainly in Somerset and bought the magnificent Heatherton Park, near Taunton. Norley Hall was sold to Charles Bell in 1900. Charles died in February 1914 and is buried in the graveyard at Norley.

Several members of the Woodhouse family are also commemorated or buried in the graveyard at the Church of St John the Evangelist, Norley.

See photograph below.



*Grade II listed Monument to the Woodhouse family & cruciform gravestones of Norley family members (KG)*

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**Believe it or not!!**

The Chester Chronicle dated 28<sup>th</sup> November 1806 claimed that there was a man named Lewis, living in the neighbourhood of Alvanley, who had 10 children that measured 20 yards.

*Richard Lewis of Alvanley did indeed have 8 sons and 2 daughters living in 1806. An average height of 6 feet was surely remarkable for the times. James, one of his sons, his wife, then his daughter Martha, farmed Bank House Farm, Alvanley, for many years.*

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**Believe it or not!!**

Brian Piers Lascelles, born 1889, youngest son of Arthur Lascelles of Norley Bank was educated at Magdalen College ,Oxford where he was known as the “Magdalen Giant” as he was 6 ft. 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. tall!

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## 18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 1916 - THE END OF THE SOMME

Allen Wales

December 1916, was a very painful time. For the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), the German Army, Field Marshall Haig, and governments on both sides of the conflict. On the home front the pain was much closer, communities had been devastated, families left without husbands, fathers, sons. Christmas 1916 would be very different for many. In Frodsham the losses totaled 27 men, including the following; Lance Corporal Thomas Baines, Private John Hulse, Private Daniel Brown, Private Thomas Yarwood, Private Henry G Walker, Private James Warburton, Private Peter Worrall and Private Abraham Worrall. These people lived and worked in Frodsham, with addresses such as Five Crosses, Hatley, The Quay, Marsh Lane and Main Street.

To lose so many in such a short space of time, in such a small community, (Frodsham was about a third the size it is currently), must have pushed a dagger through the heart of the community. One community amongst many, all struggling to come to terms with their own losses. To inform the families that this was wearing down the Germans and would ultimately lead to their downfall, would have given little or no comfort.

But the unpalatable truth was that, because of the tragic Somme campaign, in early 1917 the German forces withdrew to the Hindenburgh line, knowing they had little chance to achieve victory on the Western Front. This would also lead them into unrestricted submarine warfare, ultimately bringing the Americans into the war. The objectives of the Somme campaign were; to relieve the pressure on the French at Verdun, wear down the German forces, (or as one General candidly put it, to kill as many Germans as possible), show the BEF was a capable fighting force, and to join the coordinated Entente assaults, as Russia also attacked in June.

Out of the carnage of the Somme came a BEF that evolved into a very credible fighting force allied with the French, and in 1917 the Americans, that would eventually triumph on the Western Front. In July 1916 the BEF was not a skilled professional army, or even a capable fighting force. It was a mass of unskilled inexperienced citizen volunteers, with the remains of the professional army of 1914. It consisted of farm hands, shop workers, factory workers, mechanics, rail workers, miners, painters and labourers. They were not artillerymen, pilots, machine gunners, bombers, or tank drivers. They were skilled in drill and marching, but not in taking trenches, pill boxes, machine gun posts or hand to hand combat, or killing.

As we celebrate Christmas 2016, cast a thought to the feelings around Frodsham 100 years ago. There would be little celebration in the village, for some grief, for others relief it wasn't their relative that had been lost, and hope they would be spared, as the war showed no sign of coming to an early end. Two more years and more loss would have to be endured before a peace was achieved.



*Frodsham commemorated The Battle of the Somme with a Poppy Cascade displayed in the town's Medical Centre from late October to mid-November 2016. The poppies were made by children in Frodsham junior schools and put together by members of Frodsham Town Council's World War 1 Group and volunteer helpers. The poppies represent soldiers killed in the Battle of the Somme, the grills represent barbed wire on the battlefield and the wooden crosses represent trees destroyed during the battle.*

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## HELSEBY 1916

Sue Lorimer

The year started optimistically with a golf competition on New Year's Day for both men and women on the new links on Helsby Hill. The schools reopened on the 15<sup>th</sup> January after a long closure due to an "epidemic" (probably measles) and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> more than 300 Sunday School pupils enjoyed a sumptuous tea and prize giving. However the mood soon changed. On 29<sup>th</sup> January ten new sick and injured soldiers were admitted to the Red Cross Auxiliary Military Hospital which had been set up in the Recreation Hall belonging to the Cable Works. Many of the patients were suffering from frostbite even though the weather in Helsby was unseasonably mild. Fearing an attack from the air, the Cable Works posted instructions on what to do in the event of a Zeppelin raid and the Parish Council reviewed the insurance on the Town Cottages owned by the village. Helsby fell into line with new regulations regarding lighting despite the material for obscuring the windows being hard to obtain. The locals missed the twinkling lights on the hill and the Band of Hope were forced to abandon their meetings until the lighter nights.

British Insulated Cables declared an increase in profits due to the extra work the war was generating. Many departments were working day and night but girls under the age of 19 were only earning 12/- for a 48 hour week. In April, 350 girls went on strike for more pay and only returned to work after the Works Manager, Mr Brotherton, appealed to their fathers. Their claim was referred to the Ministry of Munitions but the outcome is not known. Mr Brotherton was appointed a Magistrate in June that year. The Works was involved in another controversy later in the year when correspondence in the Chester Chronicle criticised young men working there, under the age of 25, for claiming exemption from the Services when married men were enlisting. The row rumbled on for weeks...

Patriotism was high. The schools celebrated Empire Day in May with flag flying, patriotic songs and recitations. Prayers were said for two former students, George Tweedle and Percy Evans, who still only 17, were serving on Admiral Jellicoe's ship "The Iron Duke". In July, War Saving Associations were formed in the schools. Any amount from 1d a week could be saved towards the 15s 6d savings certificate. The children also gave their pocket money to help buy sweets, chocolates and cigarettes for local boys serving in the Army and Navy, knitted scarves, socks and mittens for them, donated eggs to the local Red Cross Hospital and sent clothes and toys to the Belgium refugees.

People sought comfort in the Church. The Bishop of Chester held a mass confirmation in the Parish Church in March for 93 souls, 63 of whom were from Helsby and 18 from Alvanley. In July the annual Club Procession took place. Former residents returned to the village to meet old friends and neighbours and to

watch the parade of local clubs, headed by the Helsby Band, march to the Parish Church. The parade included the Church Lads Brigade, Fire Brigade, Foresters, Hearts of Oak, Rechabites (Christians promoting an abstinence from alcohol) and a 100 strong representation from The Druids.

There was a steady stream of sick and wounded admitted to the Red Cross Hospital throughout the year, a total of 126 inpatients staying for an average of 55 days. The nurses, members of the Red Cross and local residents did their best to entertain the soldiers. Mrs Creighton of Orchard Croft held a garden party in July, where the entertainment included a tug-of-war between the ladies and the wounded soldiers. Sadly in September Charles Howard, who had been a patient in the hospital for some time, passed away. Although he was not from the village, he was given a military funeral and laid to rest in Helsby Cemetery.

Private Harry Whitby of the Cheshire Regiment, aged 26, died on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1916. He was the son of Harry and Martha Whitby of Cromer Lake (Crowmere), Frodsham, but his widowed mother married Charles Wooldridge in 1894 and the family moved to Helsby. Harry had worked as a railway porter before he enlisted. He is remembered on the Arras Memorial.

Corp. John Clarke, of Cable Terrace, was wounded in May and was hospitalised in France. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June, it was reported that Alfred Worrall of Rake Lane had been gassed and his eyes were badly affected.

Walter James Fairhurst, also of Cable Terrace, died when the ship he was serving on, HMS Indefatigable, was sunk during the Battle of Jutland. He was only 20 and had joined the Navy as a stoker four years previously. His brother Frank, a corporal in the South Lancs Regiment, was at home recovering from a shrapnel injury. Frank Fairhurst later became a Scoutmaster at 1<sup>st</sup> Helsby.

William Henry Barlow was killed on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme. He was the son of William Bentley Barlow, the Chief Officer of the Cable Works Fire Brigade, who lived in The Avenue, Helsby. William Henry had attended Runcorn Grammar School, (now Helsby High School) and had been a choirboy and church organist. It is understood that he too was a Scoutmaster at 1<sup>st</sup> Helsby.

William Henry is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial together with Harry Hoose, also of The Avenue, who died on 11<sup>th</sup> July. Before he enlisted Harry had worked at the Cable Works and had acted as an orderly at the Red Cross Hospital in his spare time. He had been a corporal in the Church Lads Brigade and a member of the Young Men's Bible Class.

In September it was reported that Lance-Corporal Leonard Beech, of the Liverpool Pals, had been wounded in France and that Arthur Hulme, of the Cheshire Regiment, has received shrapnel injuries. Before the war both had been employed by British Insulated and Helsby Cables Ltd. In October Edgar Dixon of Oak Mount Farm, was lying wounded in a hospital in Lancashire. This brave man was to be wounded a total of three times and finally contracted meningitis from which he died on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

Many local men showed acts of gallantry and bravery under fire. Joseph Hulme, of the Cheshire Regiment, son of Mr and Mrs Philip Hulme, won the Military Medal on the Somme 7<sup>th</sup> July 1916 and Harold Nicholson Lewis, Liverpool Scottish Regiment, was awarded the Military Medal in November. Harold was the son of Mrs Amy Kate Lewis, the Headmistress of the Junior School. He was wounded twice and lost his life in October 1917. Egerton Fairclough was from Latchford, Warrington but his parents moved to Orchard Croft, Bates Lane, towards the end of the war. He was "Mentioned in Dispatches" in January 1916 and was awarded the honour posthumously. He is remembered on the Helsby War Memorial.

The Village was saddened by the death of Rev. W T Vale, aged 82, former vicar of St Paul's Church 1885 -1895, but was shocked by the sudden death of Henry Dyson Taylor, eldest son of James Taylor, co-founder of the Cable Works. Henry was killed in a motor-cycle accident on 17<sup>th</sup> December. The Christmas holiday season was spent quietly in Helsby. Rain fell in the early hours of Christmas Day but the day remained mild. The nurses at the Red Cross Auxillary Military Hospital put on entertainment for the wounded and Mr James Taylor, despite his recent bereavement, gave presents to the soldiers and nurses.



*WW1 soldiers outside the Robin Hood (undated) from Jane Arnold's collection*

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## THE FLOWER COTTAGE DISCOVERY

Kath Hewitt

In the spring of 2014 building contractors began restoring and modernising Flower Cottage, 56 Hillside Road, Overton, Frodsham.

This 1600 Grade 2 listed cruck built cottage had fallen into disrepair over the years.

While stripping the corrugated iron roof and removing the rotten beams, the contractors recovered a variety of hand-made iron thatching and builders' nails.

Then, hidden in the chimney recess at the right hand end of the cottage, they found a filthy worn-out jacket. Just how old and why it was there, was a puzzle.

The interested contractors asked if more could be found out about its history before giving the jacket and the nails to the History Society Archives for safe keeping. So began weeks of contacting specialist people for possible answers.

Elizabeth Royles, Collector & Interpretation Officer of the Grosvenor Museum, Chester and Julie Edwards, Senior Archaeologist of Chester Council, were very helpful with positive advice on seeing the photographs of the jacket and nails. Elizabeth gave me essential advice on how to de-bug the garment by putting it in and out of a freezer over 11 days, making it safe to handle. Mrs Dorothy Smith and Nick Smith were kind enough to supply the freezer and keep an eye on the garment!

Dan Garner, archaeologist, was intrigued by the nails especially, commenting that they 'were remarkable' and possibly much older than 1600, which coincided with English Heritage's views about the age of the cottage that they had given to the contractors.

Dr Miles Lambert, Senior Curator of the Costume Museum at Platt Hall, Manchester, suggested I contact Dinah Eastop, a Fellow of the National Archives, Kew, and Consultant in Conservation & Material Culture.

After reading the various emails and seeing the photographs sent to her, Dinah confirmed that in her opinion the garment was deliberately hidden and therefore recorded it in her 'Deliberately Concealed Garments Project' files. She was extremely interested in this discovery and offered to give an illustrated talk to the society about hidden garments. I put her in touch with Betty Wakefield (Programme Secretary) who booked her for the 2016 season.

To find out more about the jacket, an appointment was made to visit Dr. Miles Lambert at the superb and elegant Platt Hall Costume Museum.

History Society members were later emailed the following summary of that meeting:-

*'Richard and I had an hour with Dr Miles Lambert at the Platt Hall Costume Museum in Manchester yesterday. Looking at every inch of the moth eaten and smoke damaged jacket he, like us, became very dirty indeed. However, he added more to our knowledge by pointing out similar styles in his Costume reference books.*

*He believes that it was a slight young man or youth's garment of the 1800-1830s era and that it would have been called a 'coat' as the word 'jacket' would not have been in use at that time. 'Jacket' is a mid C15th French term not then used in England.*

*It probably began life as a respectable day coat of typical local fashion, finely stitched, of good strong wool (not moleskin as he first thought) and a cotton lining with heavier linen or cotton in the shoulder pads. It would have been handed down and heavy woollen patches added with increasingly poor stitching until it eventually became a workman's garment.*

*The placing of the patches on the lower underside of each forearm was puzzling as to the kind of work our youth might have been involved in, thus raising speculative ideas.*

*One cuff had been turned and the other seems to have been added. The collar would have been turned down with reverses (not upstanding as first thought) and appeared to be lined with hessian or a heavy linen. The back of the jacket was flared in a fashionable manner and the remaining buttons showed it had been a good quality garment when first made.*

*Because of its location in the rafters and chimney recess in Flower Cottage, Dr. Lambert felt that it was a deliberately concealed coat but for what purpose he had no idea. He quoted old local customs for hiding various objects, e.g. protection against witch craft. He also agreed with Dan Garner's view that the nails were remarkable and older than 1600, the estimated date of the cottage. This is as much as we know so far.'*

Several months later, I was given a conducted tour of the newly renovated cottage which was delightful and most welcome. It was all there - the past, the present and the future of a Frodsham cottage.

## **Update**

**The coat** and nails are stored in the Archive Room, carefully wrapped in acid free tissue. They have been displayed five times so far and I became concerned about the fragility of the coat. I contacted Ann French, the Textile Conservation Specialist at the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester and emailed all the information I had about the coat and conditions in which it was stored. I was relieved to know, that apart from regularly checking its state for possible infestation or mould, the coat would be relatively safe.

**The nails:** I have spent a long time trying to date the nails more accurately by asking locally if anyone had knowledge of old carpenters' or blacksmiths' techniques and also by contacting the London Museum and the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum for their help - all without success. So that is on-going.

My grateful thanks go to the contractors, Michael Connor and John Davies of Ascent Building Solutions, Warrington, for their enthusiasm and interest. They gave their time and expertise – and placed the nails and coat with the History Society Archives for safe keeping.



*The Flower Cottage coat*



*Flower Cottage restoration and on-site 'finds'*

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### **Believe it or not!!**

The Cheshire Observer reported the death at Dutton Workhouse of a well-known local recluse known as "Old George Thompson" who used to roam the neighbourhood night and day, summer and winter, clad in an old worn-out coat that covered him from head to foot. It was thought that at one time he had been comfortably off, but "Old George" used to sleep in the caves on Overton and Helsby Hills. It seems that he was well educated and had been skilled at drawing and playing the violin in his youth.

The 1891 census has George Thompson, aged 50, unemployed, born in Liverpool and living in a shed at Netherton. The 1901 census shows him aged 59, unemployed and living in the Sand Hole, Helsby Hill. But, the report of his death was dated February 1899!

Two weeks later the Observer retracted the story saying that George was still alive, although very ill. George Thompson died at Dutton Workhouse on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1904 and is buried at St Laurence Church. George was born in Liverpool, circa 1833, the only child of John and Betsey Thompson, who were grocers of Vicarage Lane, Overton. On John's death in 1865, everything was left to George including the family house and garden. In 1871 George was living alone in Vicarage Lane working as a gardener. Whatever happened to see him end up as a homeless recluse who died in the workhouse?

## THE SPRITE OF MICKLEDALE

Sue Lorimer

This story was told by James F Robinson in The Cheshire Observer 4<sup>th</sup> Jan 1879. James Frodsham Robinson was a chemist, druggist and botanist whose shop was in Main St, Frodsham. Arthur R Smith describes his life in detail in his book "Brief Lives".

Mr Robinson begins by describing Mickledale, on Overton Hill, as consisting of two farmhouses and a few shepherds' cottages, although it was once known by the grander title of Mickledale Hall. One farmhouse, almost in ruins, once sheltered the non-conformist minister Matthew Henry, who preached there for several months. Nearby were traces of an ancient British fortification and remains of Druidical worship.

Nearby, across two meadows lay the secluded valley of Dunsdale, enclosed by high masses of red sandstone. It was also known locally as Dungeon-dale Glen or Dungeedale. At the head of the Glen, near to Mickledale, was a small well beneath the "beetling" (overhanging) cliff, hidden from view by elder bushes. On the face of the rock above the well grew a very rare moss, *Orthodontium gracile*, only found in one other place in Britain. Lily of the Valley also grew wild in the valley.

Mr Robinson tells how Earl Rivers of Frodsham Castle had given the tenancy of Mickledale Hall to one of his Knights as a reward for his courage, loyalty and perhaps to keep him near in case of attack by the Welsh. The Knight also had charge of the beacon on Beacon Hill. The Knight, wandering through Dungeon-dale Glen one moonlit autumn evening, and perhaps contemplating mans' immortality, heard the sound of feasting and merrymaking. He could see no-one, but on going to the edge of the cliff he heard a shrill trumpet call and silence fell over the lonely Glen. The Knight recounted this story to the sentinel who occupied a hut next to the beacon, but he had no explanation for the events. The sentinel advised the Knight to tell no-one but to return to the same spot the following evening. Both attributed the sounds to local bandits hidden in a cave and by keeping silent they could capture them and rid the country of some robbers.

The following evening the Knight returned to Dungeon-dale Glen. Although acting as eaves dropper went against the grain for this open and honest Knight, he hid in the furze and waited. Near midnight he heard the distant sound of a shrill clarinet, joined later by other instruments. He could not see anyone but thought that the music came from the vicinity of the well. Unfortunately the rocks beneath his position acted as a canopy over the well, so he decided to go to the head of the Glen to get a better look. As soon as he appeared in the open meadow the music ceased and an examination of the well and nearby rocks showed no signs of a cave where the musicians could have hidden.

The following day he made a hide from the heath and bushes, positioned it near to the well and hid there until evening. The wait paid off. On a small mound, favoured by local rabbits, he spied a party of little people preparing for a feast. He remained quiet, not wishing to disturb the fairies, but he was drawn to a small carved goblet on a cloth in the centre of the party. When a waiter took the elegant cup to the well to fill it with the clear sparkling water, the Knight gently took it from him. The waiter

screamed, alerting the fairies, who fled. As he was leaving one of the bolder fairy uttered the following curse.

*“If ever this cup shall break or fall  
Bad luck shall come to Mickledale Hall”*

The Knight ignored the threat and took the goblet home where it became a curiosity and was viewed by the wealthy and the nobility of the land. However he never let the goblet out of his hands and had an iron chest made to keep it safe.

Upon the death of the Knight, the goblet passed into the possession of Earl Rivers. One of the English Princesses visiting Rocksavage Castle heard about the goblet and visited Frodsham Castle to inspect it. Earl Rivers flattered by the visit, allowed the Princess to hold the goblet, which she carelessly dropped on to the stone floor of the reception hall and it broke in two. The Court Chronicles of the day reported that it was quite accidental and State Papers, now held at Windsor, reported that the fairies, in great glee, celebrated for three months, dancing round Mickledale, singing this refrain.

*“Let us say, let us say  
Farewell to luck  
Come along bad luck,  
Fairies dance till dawning of day  
Good folks all, good folks all  
Farewell good luck  
Come along bad luck  
Fairies joy at Mickledale Hall”*

Mr Robinson concluded his story by saying that the ancient Mickledale Estate was still barren and desolate. The old Dungeon-dale Glen was very slightly altered, and that the good fairy folk had entirely deserted the whole region.

The original article, written by Mr Robinson in the poetic language of the time, can be seen in the British Newspaper Archive.

In my opinion it was Earl Rivers and Frodsham Castle where the bad luck fell. John, Earl Rivers died on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 1654 and the following night the Castle was burnt down with his body inside. The Princess was probably one of the daughters of Charles I and he didn't have much luck either!

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# TAKING LOCAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE TO THE COMMUNITY

Heather Powling

During the past year members of Frodsham and District History Society have been active in sharing their knowledge of local history and heritage with wide-ranging groups of people in the local community.

This year, the annual Frodsham Festival of Walks included three 'historical' walks. The Rock, Pop and Leather Walk on Sunday 24 April, led by Sue Lorimer & David George, visited local sites of springs and wells, particularly those associated with the Frodsham Mineral Water Company and the tannery on Fountain Lane. These were sites which had been identified and researched by the Sandstone Ridge, Rocks and Springs Project. Kath and Anita Boardman led the Norley Lanes Walk on 25 April which took in features of 'Old Norley', including listed buildings and former sand quarry sites. The Festival culminated on Monday 2 May with a gentle, figure-of-eight walk from the Queen's Head to Castle Park House lead by Kath Gee and Graham Bondi which focused on historic buildings recognised for their heritage value by blue plaques. Plaques were awarded and funded by the former Frodsham Society, the Frodsham Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme or by Frodsham and District History Society, supported by a Frodsham Community Grant. This final walk ended at the Queen's Head with refreshments to celebrate the 13th consecutive annual Frodsham Festival of Walks.



Kath Gee has also once again co-ordinated a very successful Heritage Open Days programme. It was gratifying to see the number of Frodsham entries in the catalogue, jointly produced by the Cheshire Civic Trust and Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council. Castle Park House, The Old Hall, the Ring o'Bells and St Laurence Church were amongst the historic buildings that welcomed visitors between September 8th and 11th. St Laurence Church now runs an annual programme of events which links in with the Heritage Open Days – this year's events culminating in afternoon tea and a concert of music by Daniel and Peter Axworthy, David Leslie, Harry Leather and Ian Jesse.

For the first time, the St Laurence programme also included a self-guided walk around 'Historic Overton'. The route guides walkers from the Ring o'Bells up Bellemonte Road to Hillside Road, along to Flower Cottage, then in a clockwise circle via School Lane, Church Road, Vicarage Lane to the Methodist Church and back along Hillside Road to the starting point. It includes some history about the buildings seen along the way, some glimpses into the past and images of the area as it would have been approximately one hundred years ago. The walk was planned and prepared by Heather Powling, Kath Gee and Sue Lorimer. The leaflets (£1.00 each for church funds and still available) proved popular and we hope to build on this venture next year.

Kath Hewitt continues to answer enquiries on a regular basis and her separate report in this journal is evidence of the wide variety of questions she deals with. Kath and her husband Richard have exhibited items from the archives at several local events over the past two years. The most recent was at the Harvest of Memories at Frodsham Methodist church on Saturday 25 September. Visitors were fascinated by the sheer range in time and nature of the items displayed and we are grateful to Kath and Richard for all the thought and effort which they have devoted to showing off Frodsham's history to a wider public.

Also at the end of September, Kath and Richard Hewitt and Sue Lorimer joined members of Frodsham Town Council's World War I Group to construct the Cascade of Poppies displayed in Princeway Medical Centre. The Cascade commemorates Frodsham soldiers killed at the Battle of the Somme. Children from each of Frodsham's primary schools made more than 1000 poppies which make up this eye-catching feature. The Cascade was formally opened on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October by Brenda Frodsham and Gillian Gleave, relatives of William Jeffs of Frodsham, who died at the Somme. A surprised and delighted Brenda Frodsham was presented at the ceremony with a WW1 plaque awarded to William Jeffs which had been found by Wilf Cotgreave in 1948. The plaque had been inherited by Mr Cotgreave's son, John, who spent years trying to trace the owner. Percy Dunbavand, a relative of Mr Cotgreave, happened to visit the stand of the World War 1 Group at Frodsham's Festival in the Park in July, and with the help of the Group, was able to confirm the details. He presented the plaque to Brenda and Gill on behalf of Mr Cotgreave, who was unable to attend the ceremony.

Membership of Frodsham and District History Society has reached about 80 in each of the last three years. We are always pleased to welcome new members or visitors to our monthly speaker meetings. In addition, there are also many opportunities to share particular historical interests with us at other community events. If you would like to get involved or have ideas and expertise to offer something new, any of our members would love to hear from you. We can be contacted via the email addresses below, or come and talk to us at one of our monthly speaker meetings:

Kath Gee - [Kgee96@aol.com](mailto:Kgee96@aol.com)

Kath Hewitt - [kath.hewitt@btinternet.com](mailto:kath.hewitt@btinternet.com)

Heather Powling - [heather.powling@hotmail.com](mailto:heather.powling@hotmail.com)

Sue Lorimer – [susan.lorimer1@btinternet.com](mailto:susan.lorimer1@btinternet.com)



**Captions clockwise from top left:** *Richard Hewitt and visitors at the Harvest of Memories; afternoon tea with music at St Laurence's; Kath Hewitt with Cllr Mallie Poulton, Mayor of Frodsham; Kath and Richard Hewitt and Sue Lorimer preparing the Poppy Cascade; Brenda Frodsham after receiving the WW1 Death Plaque from Percy Dunbavand.*

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