



**FRODSHAM AND DISTRICT  
HISTORY SOCIETY**

**JOURNAL**



**Issue No.45  
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Editors: Kath Gee & Heather Powling

**Journal of**  
**FRODSHAM AND DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY**

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Front cover picture:

**Magna Carta Memorial, Runnymede**

The Magna Carta Memorial was established by the American Bar Association to commemorate the sealing of the Magna Carta, (the great charter), which is held as being the first "bill of human rights", and established the principle of freedom under the law. The charter was sealed by King John on the 15th June 1215 at a location on the opposite side of the Thames to the memorial.

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# HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS

**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; Mr Andrew Faraday; Mr Brian Keeble; Mrs Pam Keeble; Mrs Heather Powling\*; Mrs Beryl Wainwright; Mrs Betty Wakefield, Programme Secretary; Mr Tony Wakefield.

\*Elected at AGM 2015

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We are pleased to present you with our History Society Journal for 2015. My thanks go to the people who have contributed articles and photographs and the hard-working editors who have strived to assemble a diverse, interesting and topical issue. You will be aware that 2015 has been a year of important anniversaries:

On 15<sup>th</sup> June we celebrated the octocentenary of King John putting his seal to the Magna Carta at Runnymede, near Windsor. In the 'great charter' the barons of the country challenged the power of the king. The impact of the Magna Carta was initially short-lived but there is general agreement that later modifications form the basis of modern British democracy and law.

200 years later, on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1415, and against all odds, Henry V regained lost English lands in France at the Battle of Agincourt. It is claimed that the victory was gained by its skilled archers. Many of them were from Cheshire where it is believed they practiced from an early age each Sunday using yew longbows on the village 'butts'. When the archers ran out of arrows they fought with pole axes which were very effective in hand to hand combat with armoured Frenchmen on a muddy battlefield.

The bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo was commemorated on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015. Victory was achieved by the English with Arthur Wellesley at its head, aided by the forces of the Allied Armies. This battle, 'a damned close-run thing' marks the last time a grateful nation rewarded an army leader with a title and an estate. Wellesley became the Duke of Wellington and owner of Stratfield Saye in Hampshire. He was also given a pension by the Belgium Government, an estate in Portugal and the title Marquis of Duro. In more recent times his family gave Apsley House, No.1, London, to the nation including the Duke's art collection and his Waterloo gifts and trophies, though the family were able to retain an apartment.

I thank Betty Wakefield for the variety of interesting speakers she has invited to our monthly meetings; Maurice Richardson, Pam and Brian Keeble and for their continuing work with the historic images website – [frodshamhistoricimages.co.uk](http://frodshamhistoricimages.co.uk) – and for their production of the booklet entitled *Stories Behind the Pictures 2015*; Kath Gee for organising the June visit to the Lion Salt Works at Marston.

You will find articles on World War II, local history and heritage news in the pages that follow. We hope you enjoy reading this issue of the Society's Journal.

Brian Dykes

## THE REEDS AT RUNNYMEDE?

*A poem commemorating the signing of Magna Carta  
Runnymede, Surrey, June 15, 1215*

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### **Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) 1922**

At Runnymede, at Runnymede,  
What say the reeds at Runnymede?  
The lissom reeds that give and take,  
That bend so far, but never break,  
They keep the sleepy Thames awake  
With tales of John at Runnymede.

At Runnymede, at Runnymede,  
Oh, hear the reeds at Runnymede:  
"You musn't sell, delay, deny,  
A freeman's right or liberty.  
It wakes the stubborn Englishry,  
We saw 'em roused at Runnymede!"

"When through our ranks the Barons came,  
With little thought of praise or blame,  
But resolute to play the game,  
They lumbered up to Runnymede;  
And there they launched in solid line  
The first attack on Right Divine –  
The curt uncompromising 'Sign!'  
They settled John at Runnymede.

"At Runnymede, at Runnymede,  
Your rights were won at Runnymede!  
No freeman shall be fined or bound,  
Or dispossessed of freehold ground,  
Except by lawful judgment found  
And passed upon him by his peers.  
Forget not, after all these years,  
The Charter Signed at Runnymede."

And still when mob or Monarch lays  
Too rude a hand on English ways,  
The whisper wakes, the shudder plays,  
Across the reeds at Runnymede.  
And Thames, that knows the moods of kings,  
And crowds and priests and suchlike things,  
Rolls deep and dreadful as he brings  
Their warning down from Runnymede!

# FROM THE ARCHIVES 2015

Kath Hewitt

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Last year I changed the format of my annual report to use archival material about two young Frodsham people's wartime experiences in 1914-1918: Elsie Davies who nursed in the Frodsham Auxiliary Military Hospital and George Hutchison who survived the sinking of the Lusitania.

This year, to mark the ending of WW2 in 1945, I am able to publish the following two historic items from the archives with permission from the families.

The first is a letter from a soldier writing home to his Frodsham family, describing the 1944 British advance through Belgium and on towards Germany.

The second is a detailed account of a Frodsham soldier's horrifying experiences whilst approaching, entering and moving on from Belsen in 1944/45.

## LETTER FROM JACK

14672434 THOMAS. J. SGMN.  
H. TROOP.  
HQ Group Royal Artillery  
Guards Armoured Division,  
BLA

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> September 1944.

Dear All

First let me apologise for not writing for so long but by the time you have read this letter you will understand why.

The security ban has been lifted a bit and now we are able to tell you about the big advance we have made. Well it sort of began on the eastern side of the Seine and in the general direction of Belgium. As soon as it was light we were off and we travelled until it was nearly dark each night. We got pushed on and on liberating place after place, over the Somme, past Vimy Ridge and Arras which my dad will have seen in the last war.

Then on the 3<sup>rd</sup> we crossed the Belgian border and on the 4<sup>th</sup> we did the liberation march into Brussels. If you get to see it on the news at the pictures, you go, no-one will ever be able to describe the tremendous welcome we got and besides it is quite probable you may see me, riding in the front of a three tonne lorry. You will see all our trucks going up the streets in a double line. It was a marvellous affair with hundreds of trucks, tanks, bren carriers and everything. Each and every one got a separate welcome.

It was fatal to stop as they just pulled us out of the trucks and kissed us, shook hands and made us drink the wine they had stored up for the occasion. And showed us how they felt to be rid of the Germans again.

We camped in a big field and were allowed to go out and have a look around the town. What surprised us most was the number of people who were English or American, or could speak really good English. They all turned out to show us the sights and take us home to supper. We were with some American people, who came from Texas and were really well to do. They took us for a walk round and showed us all the best sights, including the cafes, restaurants etc which the Germans had used and had been owned by collaborators, which were now wrecked by these joy crazy people. They also showed us the German HQ's and the Gestapo place which had also been wrecked.

Then they took us home to their big house and gave us a lovely supper. It was the finest house I have ever been in, with all the glass, tables and the biggest sideboard, which included cocktail bar and glass cabinet that I have ever seen.

They (army) had to spoil it all – when I got back to camp they told me I had to go on guard.

Now I am all for getting off after Jerry again and doing the march into Berlin so that the war will be over and I can come home again.

I got the parcel with the cake and stuff in today. Thank you very much for all you put in, it was a lovely change when we had coffee and cake today. They had all kept well and were not a bit crushed.

Well, I think that is all for now, so look after yourselves and God bless you all. Cheerio.

Jack

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## **2. 17<sup>th</sup> ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY – 11<sup>th</sup> ARMoured DIVISION SURVEY PARTY, JULY 1944 – DIVISION SIGN "THE CHARGING BULL"**

Written by Arthur Beresford Harrop, Summer 1985

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Left U.K. from Newhaven on a Liberty boat and landed at the Arromanches Beachhead. Tank battles at Caen and broke out of the Falaise Gap. Crossed the Seine by night and a long dash, 56 miles, through Northern France. Mosquito aircraft bombing Channel Ports all night. Lots of abandoned horse-drawn transport and dead horses on the road left by fleeing Germans, who did not realize we were so near. Several times German columns joined us from side roads in the dark and were unaware that we were the enemy. Some fighting with pick handles and shovels to avoid the sound of gunfire; lots of prisoners taken. On to Amiens at 5.30 am and captured the German 7<sup>th</sup> Army commander at breakfast and he cried like a baby. Rounded several frightened Germans in a wood but they soon recovered their confidence and were given chocolate and cigarettes.

On again to Lille and everywhere the people were out cheering and weeping and showering us with gifts – bottles of all kinds of drink and apples and pears. I was hit by a large pear thrown by a well meaning Frenchman. German snipers left in some houses, church towers etc and booby traps left in demolished buildings, especially in toilets!!

On to Antwerp whilst the Guards Armoured Division went south and captured Brussels. A Belgian engineer got onto the leading tank and took us by side streets and small bridges to capture the Antwerp Docks which were essential to us for landing supplies as the lines of communication were so long, stretching from Normandy, (the Channel Ports were still held by the Germans – now cut off).

Walcheren Island was still held by Germans and there was constant shelling in Antwerp but we did capture the Antwerp Commander. He was humiliated by being made to run through the town pursued by one of our Bren Gun carriers (a small tank) at a fairly fast speed to the huge delight of its local people. Also put in a cage in Antwerp Zoo!

I spent the night in a slit trench dug in the public park under some trees while Jerry was shelling us with "air bursts". It rained hard in the night and the trench filled up so I got out and slept on the ground. One of our men got three empty petrol tins and slept on them floating in his slit trench. We stayed in Antwerp a few days and had a day's leave to look around the shops. We went south a bit then to Louvain and on to Nieste. At one place near the Albert Canal I was riding a big BSA 500cc motorbike and saw several farmers crowding in a roadside ditch and not until I stopped the engine did I realize that Jerry was machine-gunning the road – I could hear the Spandau – "ddddd". We went up to Eindhoven and supported the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division who took a bridge over a canal between Zamanem and Asten. The villagers of Asten had all been sheltering in a wood but came out after the Germans retreated. We stayed for a week or two at Asten doing a lot of survey work. The Colonel took his O.P. tank forward and fired a few shots into the Reichwald Forest at maximum range – about six and a half miles and then hurried back – the first Regiment to land a shot in Germany!! We got billets at Asten in a sort of Council house with a working class family. Most of the people worked in a small clothing factory. I got a pair of miniature wooden clogs from the local clog-maker and watched him carve them out of a block of wood. He was delighted with two packets of Players cigarettes which I did not use but which came up with the rations. These were 14 man packs, A or B – the best had tinned bacon, corned beef, rice pudding and tinned fruit and everything else from sugar and salt to toilet paper and they were really delicious.

We stayed in this part of Holland for the rest of the winter moving about this side of the River Maas between Eindhoven, Helmond, Lisse, Weert (where we used to go to a mobile shower unit for a hot shower and clean underwear – a vest and long johns which never fitted) and Deurne. Jerry held the other side of the Maas at Venlo

and Roermonde and it wasn't healthy to get too near the river as he used to "stalk" us with his 88 mm guns.

There was a pocket of Germans this side of the river and it was decided to straighten out the line for the winter and to give us a break, the Yanks sent a division up to clear it. They had everything – I never saw so much equipment – it was an armoured division with huge mobile cranes for recovering disabled tanks. They had super rations too. After they had a day of action in there I asked Tech. Adj. how they were doing and he said 'they have advanced exactly minus 500 yards.' So we helped to clear the bulge and were there all winter. It snowed heavily and the villages looked lovely. At Deurne we used to take a tank into the forest and cut down trees for firewood. It was good work with big axes off the tanks. The Mayor complained to the O/C (he owned the wood) and the O/C said that if he didn't like it we would move to another village and that ended the complaints.

The cold was intense and bare skin froze to motorcycle handle bars and jeep steering wheels. The tank tracks froze to the ground in the night and the drivers were ordered to get up every two hours and start up and move the tank a few feet to free the tracks in case we got an order for a quick move. One chap who was afraid of the shelling one night slept under the tank and was killed when it was moved. The tanks were hopeless on frozen roads and could not be steered.

One day we had to take a criminal to prison at Liege in a half track vehicle and it skidded all over the road. We had another billet with the schoolmaster and his wife used to make lovely cherry flan for us.

During this winter the Survey Party went forward to take up a position at a farm in the forest close to a wooden tower normally used for watching for forest fires, it was about 50ft high. The farming family didn't like us – I think they were Germans. We did shifts up this tower and did observations and angles across the Maas on vapour trails (fine trails at night) rising from the ground miles away in Germany. They were V2 rockets going to London but we weren't told at the time. Two other Survey Parties were deployed in other towers along the river and the three observations pin-pointed the origin of the V2.

The Yanks used to come along this road with a loud-speaker truck and shout out to Jerry to surrender but they soon stopped it when Jerry did some sound ranging on them and they got shelled. They also pin-pointed us in the tower and sent a few over but never hit us. One day the Americans asked if their OP officer could come up the tower to direct a shot from their 105 mm guns. The Yankee gunners used to shout 'another egg coming over' in contrast to our gunners 'shot one over'. The Germans came through the forest at night and put a tight wire across the road which killed one of our Dispatch Riders.



A week or so before Christmas we were given 48 hours leave to go to Brussels but we got there in time to be ordered back – Rundstedt had made his push in the Ardennes, 16<sup>th</sup> December I think. We spent a whole day in a Bedford truck trying to get to Brussels with roads clogged with vehicles and a night and a day getting back again where I spent a night in a slit trench at the roadside covered with snow and a roll of barbed wire between me and Jerry. I also had a half pint of rum.

In the Spring of 1945 preparations were being made to cross the Rhine. The Guards Armoured Division was to get to Nijmegen and Arnhem to support the Airborne Division but they never got there in time. Thousands of guns were in place all along the Rhine including some 9 inch naval guns and shelling went on day and night. On the day of the attack the air was full of aircraft and gliders – Yank Transports towing gliders which landed short sometimes near us and the men had folding bicycles and all sorts of things. I saw one Yank Transport hit and it went nose up then crashed in flames.

We crossed the Rhine near Wesel on a pontoon bridge (I took the Colonel over on the pillion of a motorcycle) and the destruction by the artillery bombardment was total. There was not a building left standing – farms and houses were flattened, some still burning and the smell of horses, cattle and pigs burning was sickening. Even now in 1985 the smell of burning takes me back to the Rhine crossing.

We headed northwest avoiding the industrial Ruhr to Rheine on the Dortmund Ems Canal and then east to Osnabruck, Rabber, Lenern, Rahdam, Uchtee, Stolzenau (in a wood two German youths had killed two British and were trying to burn them with dead leaves. They didn't live.) and where we crossed the River Weser, Rehlung, Schwarnstedt, Winsen where German officers came under a flag of truce (and were blindfolded part of the way) to inform us of a severe outbreak of typhoid in a village ahead, and to arrange a temporary truce for two days whilst we got through – the war to resume on the other side. This was the notorious Belsen Camp.

Typhoid being caused by lice, we all had anti-lice powder pumped up our shirts and down our trousers and off we went. We came to this large camp surrounded by a barbed wire fence with Hungarian soldiers, armed to the teeth with grenades and revolvers around their belts, on guard outside the fence. Inside was dreadful to see. There were scores of people in striped pyjamas, like living skeletons sitting and lying about, some dead, some drinking from dirty puddles, and the smell was terrible.

Major Chapman, in charge of our AA tank went to the Commandant's (von Kramer) office and was so incensed by what he saw that he hit von Kramer over the head with his revolver and locked him in a large fridge for a while – he was purple when he came out.

We put our water cart in with 600 gallons of sterilized water and the poor inmates who were strong enough mobbed it and we had to put an armed guard on to serve out the water properly. We moved on to start the war again on the other side of the forest and discovered that the Germans had re-mined the road and the leading tank had a track blown off.

This was about the day President Roosevelt died. We were all saddened by this and the horrible sight and smell of Belsen. We entered a farmhouse that night and found the chimney full of smoked sausages. Then on to cross the River Aller where we were held up by a Tiger Tank on the other side, A Recce car went forward but was 'chewed up' by an 88 mm shell from the Tiger and the driver got out all right but I remember that he was complaining that he had lost all his personal luggage in the armoured car. We called up the RAF Lightnings – Code Word 'Limejuice' and we fired red smoke shells at the Tiger to identify it. In a few minutes two Lightnings came and dive-bombed the tank with 2 lots of 2 rockets each and destroyed it. We went northwest across Luneberg Heath to Luneberg and crossed the Elbe on another pontoon bridge after dark. It was a slippery approach down a steep bank and the same up the other side under heavy shell fire. As we came out on top the column halted for a while and in the comparative silence a nightingale was singing at the roadside. I wrote home and told this to my Mother.

We came to Luneberg and Scharzenhoch to the outskirts of Lubeck where we pulled off into a field in daylight. We spread out – luckily, because a single German aircraft came over and dropped a bomb on us which half-buried the Doctor's halftrack and killed a dispatch rider who had just set up his tent for the night. The aircraft came over again and dropped an object which we watched fascinated and frightened but it was an empty cardboard box – cynical joker.

The war was over the following day. We went north over the Kiel Canal to liberate Denmark. There had been no war in this part of Germany and the arrogant Nazis had smart uniforms and polished jackboots whilst we were a bit untidy I suppose. We spent a few days at a place called Gettauf where there was an establishment for producing blue eyed, fair haired babies for the 1000 year Reich, complete with blue eyed, fair haired women and fathers to match.

From there we went to a place on the Baltic near Eckernforde – a large farm by the sea. It had an enormous barn with a thatched roof right down to the ground and two storks nesting on top. They had Polish and French slaves who, we were told, were chastised with a whip. I saw the farmer's wife with a whip approaching a Polish servant (slave) and I pointed my Sten gun at her and she put the whip down. The beach was clean and pebbly. A German submarine came close in and the captain, a redhead, and crew came ashore and surrendered. They were locked in the barn for the night but the captain and others got out and scuttled the submarine, making the beach oily. We did not see him again. We later went out in a rowing boat with a

large quantity of revolvers and other small arms surrendered and tipped them all into the sea.

After a few days we moved off and occupied Martin Bormann's house not far away. He had been Hitler's deputy. It was a huge house, white with thatched roof and farm buildings and stables to match. The stables had white tiles floor to ceiling and were fitted out with mahogany doors, windows and stalls. In the house the gun room was outstanding. The walls covered by animal skins and pictures of Bormann and Goering and others standing with rifles and one foot on wild animals they had shot. The floor was made of large crazy-paving stone and there were animal skins, zebra etc there too. On each side of the large fireplace was a stuffed Great Bustard which I suppose they had shot. Bormann's car was a bullet-proof Mercedes and the Colonel had a great time riding about in this grey-coloured car. He also rode some of the white horses that were in the stables. We never saw Borman.

From here I was sent to the Woolwich Barracks via Hamburg and Tilbury to await Class B release to return to the Police Force.

### **Editors' note**

Arthur Beresford Harrop was born 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1916, in Oldham and died 18th June, 1986 in Nantwich. He married Betty Nield, sister of local resident & former Frodsham Councillor, John Nield.



PC362 Arthur Beresford Harrop joined the Police on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1939 & left to join the Army on 13<sup>th</sup> September, 1943. He returned to the Police Service on 14<sup>th</sup> December, 1945, and remained in the Cheshire Constabulary until his retirement on 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1970. Arthur was a police constable in Stalybridge until his move to Daresbury in the mid-1950s. He received his Police Long Service Award and Good Conduct Medal in 1961.

Photograph courtesy of John Nield; text from Genealogy & Ancestry websites.

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# RECALLING CHANGES AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II

Tony Field

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Victory in Europe was declared on Tuesday 8th May 1945 and after nearly 6 years of fighting and heavy losses on both sides this was greeted with huge relief. There were celebrations throughout Europe, most of these spontaneous and many will remember seeing pictures of these.

Although the fighting was over in Europe there were still heavy battles going on in Far East Asia as the Allies drove back the Japanese culminating in the use of the most deadly weapon known at the time: the Atom Bomb. Japan surrendered on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1945 with the following day declared as VJ Day.

Many servicemen found that their return to their families was delayed, in some cases for a year or more, because of distance, the availability of transport and the safety and security of the former enemy territory.

My own family experience was typical: my three uncles did not get back home until 1946. One was building refugee camps in Austria for those fleeing the Russian occupation of their countries, one was helping with the release and return home of Italian prisoners of war and the third uncle was in Palestine trying to keep the peace between the Arabs and the Jews. Two other people I knew were similarly delayed, one was in a POW camp in Burma and the other was helping to rebuild the Volkswagen plant. As you can guess this delay wasn't popular with them, their families and their employers who had to keep jobs open for their return.

The events of 1945 are remembered with great horror and sadness, the truth about the concentration camps such as Auschwitz, the treatment of prisoners in the Far East and the huge losses on both sides of civilians and military. The end of the war also revealed enormous difficulties facing virtually all of Europe in feeding its population, rebuilding homes, factories and the infrastructure.

There was a determination that this should be the last major conflict and that all sides, winners and losers, if there are any in war, should be able to get back to their normal lives as soon as possible.

It was 1945 that saw the birth of the United Nations and its offshoots UNESCO and the World Bank. OXFAM, itself, was founded in 1942 and its priority then was to relieve famine, still its main objective today. Unfortunately much of the need arises as a result of wars, not on as large a scale as 1939-45 but equally devastating for those affected. Nature, as we know, has also played its part with

drought, disease and events such as the Boxing Day Tsunami and recent earthquakes.

On a lighter note life went on in those dark days, people went to work, played and listened to music, read a lot (TV in the UK and in Europe was shut down for the duration of the war), went to the cinema, concerts, shows, theatre etc. What follows is a reminder of those days.

According to the newspapers of the time the day celebrations would include: Dancing and entertainment in public parks, bonfires, pubs open until 12.00 pm and in the cities, especially London, the floodlighting of public buildings. Although to most of us the return of street lights (gas lamps in my village) was good enough.

The 1000 guineas horse race was run that day at Newmarket. And, for those still standing there was a radio broadcast by King George VI at 9.00 pm.

On the music front "swing" remained dominant although traditional jazz became increasingly popular.

Singers included:

Female

Ella Fitzgerald  
Peggy Lee  
Lena Horne  
Dinah Shore  
Judy Garland  
Jo Stafford  
Vera Lynn  
Anne Shelton

Male

Bing Crosby  
Frank Sinatra  
Dick Haymes  
Nat King Cole  
Perry Como  
Al Bowlly  
Sam Browne

Hit songs included: Cruising Down the River, My Guyos Come Back, We'll Gather Lilacs in the Spring Again and hits from "Carousel" which had opened on Broadway.

At the cinema Elizabeth Taylor was making her debut in "National Velvet" whilst "Casablanca", "The Way To The Stars" and many "patriotic" films were showing locally. "The Lost Weekend" was the hit of the Oscars with Ray Milland winning the best actor award. Shirley Temple got married, which was a shock to those of us, still in short trousers!

The principal entertainment for most people was the radio with ITMA (Tommy Handley), the Garrison Theatre, Saturday Night Theatre, Much Binding in the Marsh, Brains Trust and Twenty Questions all favourites. Listeners were finally told who was reading the news after years of anonymity with newsreaders

including Alvar Lidell, Freddy Grisewood, Bruce Belfrage, John Snagge and Stuart Hibbert.

Sport took awhile to get going, very little competitive sport in Britain but in football Stanley Matthews, Tom Finney, Tommy Lawton, Sam Bartram and Bert Trautmann would soon be in action. In cricket Len Hutton, Cyril Washbrook, Walter Hammond, Denis Compton and Bill Edrich were gearing up for the summer. In boxing Bruce Woodcock was the British Heavyweight champion having beaten Jack London and in the USA there was Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson.

Despite an acute shortage of paper books continued to appear with Nevil Shute, C S Forester, Graham Greene and Ernest Hemingway selling well 1945 saw the publication of 2 classics: Evelyn Waugh's "Brideshead Revisited" and George Orwell's "Animal Farm". The Poet Laureate was John Masefield who not only wrote poetry but also novels, children's books and an excellent account of the evacuation from Dunkirk entitled "The Nine Day Wonder".

Newspapers were victims of the paper shortages and were often restricted to 4 or 6 pages. Some of the titles have now disappeared, e.g. The Daily Sketch and the Daily Herald, as have many of the magazines including Picture Post, Everybody's and Weekly Illustrated.

1945 saw two major discoveries familiar today; penicillin by Sir Howard Florey for which he received the Nobel Prize and the ball point pen by Laszio Biro.

Prefabs started to make their appearance in a drive to provide much needed housing to make up for bomb damage and the flood of refugees, I remember a neighbour being allocated one of these and being amazed by the airiness, the layout, fitted kitchen and a bathroom. Not many of these left now but despite the later problems they were highly regarded by their tenants and played an important role in filling the housing gap.

Transport was heavily reliant on buses and the battered railway network with elderly stock. Cars were few and all pre-war models, e.g. Austin 7 and 10, Ford Popular, Standard 9, Morris Minor. Motor cycles were far more common especially as the military released large numbers of their stocks of BSA M20, Norton 16H and Big4, Royal Enfield, Ariel and Matchless machines with some US Army Indian and Harley Davidson hardware. Petrol was still rationed so there was very little pleasure motoring. In my village there were more horse drawn vehicles than motor vehicles and their by-products could be recycled! Our village did have a railway station, all steam trains in those days, and a regular occurrence was the railway embankment catching fire with the sparks from the boilers. This could be quite exciting especially if you lived next to the embankment.

The end of the war did bring some improvements for children; sweets began to re-appear in the shops plus toys and fruit such as oranges and bananas. Comics also emerged such as Beano, Dandy, Radio Fun, Wizard, Hotspur and Rover. Many children got the best treat when their fathers and uncles came home from the forces although young children often did not remember these men.

The ladies also saw some brightening of their lives with nylons, cosmetics and more fashionable clothes being more obtainable. The weekly shopping improved as more meat, fish and vegetables became available and a big plus was the official end of the blackout.

It took many years for Britain to get back to normal, rationing lingered on until the 1950s, building materials were heavily restricted, and a licence was needed to build or extend a house. War damage was still visible into the 1960s in most of our cities and many pre-war businesses never re-started.

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### **Cinema in Frodsham between the Wars**

On the left is the Grand Cinema in Church Street, Frodsham, in about 1930. The Grand was opened in November 1923 when silent films were shown. The manager was Mr Tom Flyde. The first 'talkie' – Under the Greenwood Tree – was shown in 1928. The cinema closed in 1938. Image FD00799, [frodshamhistoricimages.co.uk](http://frodshamhistoricimages.co.uk)



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# WATERLOO CONNECTIONS

Sue Lorimer

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The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette dated 2.10.1879, reported that “The death is announced at Helsby, of John Nield, a Waterloo Veteran, who was in his ninetieth year. He was at Badajoz and at Waterloo.”

David Hearn, who spoke to the Frodsham & District History Society in May 2015 on The Battle of Waterloo, suggested that more people claimed to be Waterloo Veterans than ever fought. People were very keen to buy drinks for the heroes!

However John Nield’s credentials can be verified. He was born in Bunbury in 1790 and attested for the Foot Guard in Litchfield in 1813. His place of birth was recorded as Bumberey [Bunbury], Cheshire. John Neild, private in 3<sup>rd</sup> Battn. Grenadier Regt. Foot Guards under Lt Colonel the Hon. H.P. Towshend was on the Waterloo Medal Roll of 1815.

On his return from the wars he married Sarah Morton in Chester in 1819 and lived in his native Bunbury bringing up 7 children. In 1842 he moved to Frodsham where his daughter Elizabeth was born. The Baptism Records show that John was a publican living in Overton and the Electoral Register of 1843 shows the “Ring O’ Bells” in the occupation of a John Nield. Latham’s History of Frodsham states that in 1843 John Nield sold the premises to George Hughes, a brewer from Warrington, for £650.

John’s eldest daughter Frances married Thomas Bate of Helsby in 1844, but John did not stay in the area. He served in the Merchant Navy sometime between 1845 and 1854 and census returns indicate that he moved about living with his married daughters. In 1851 and 1861 he was in the Manchester area and in Liverpool in 1871 where his entry on the return is marked “Waterloo Pensioner”. When his daughter Catherine married in 1860 she was described as “Kate, the fifth daughter of John Nield Esq. of Helsby”.

At the time of his death in 1879 his daughter Frances Bate, then widowed, was still living in Helsby and his youngest daughter Elizabeth, wife of Hattley Hay was living in Woodhouses, which explains why John was buried in Helsby.

Sadly there is no gravestone to mark his passing but the Burial Record is annotated “Waterloo Veteran”.

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## BLACKSMITHS IN FRODSHAM IN THE PAST

Arthur R Smith

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According to White's Guide to Cheshire (1860) John Burkhill, Thomas Shore and William Meacock were blacksmiths in the town at that time. But probably the best known blacksmiths in the village for many years were the Nields. The first in the family to practise the trade in Frodsham was Thomas Nield. His father, William Nield (1811 – 1874), had been a blacksmith in Ince village, near Ellesmere Port, since the early nineteenth century as shown in the 1841 census. William Nield had married Mary Woodfine on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1833 in Ince. In the course of the next 17 years he and Mary had nine children.

His eldest son, Thomas, followed in his father's footsteps and became a blacksmith. Born in 1835, he is recorded in the 1851 census as pursuing the trade whereas by the 1861 census he is still a blacksmith but also a farmer of two acres in Ince. In 1860 he had married Elizabeth Lightfoot. It would seem almost in the family tradition that he too in time came to have a large family of nine children. After their first child, William, was born in 1863, they decided to move to Runcorn no doubt because there were better prospects there in his trade. During the years that they lived in Runcorn they had three more children, Thomas (1864), Joseph (1867), and George (1869). Then later that year they uprooted themselves again and this time moved to Frodsham. Thomas set up his smithy in Church Street, Frodsham close to the railway bridge. About the same time Thomas's younger brother, Joseph, started another smithy in Frodsham which was situated behind the wooden shops in Church Street near to the National School for Girls.

Even in a small town like Frodsham there was plenty of work for the blacksmith in the 1870s and 1880s. In those days there would have been many horses trundling up and down the various streets. There were the horse drawn carts of the milkman, the grocer and the baker and the suppliers of timber and coal, along with the heavier carts from firms like Rigby's flour mill near the River Weaver bridge. Not to forget the dozens of horse-drawn carts going to and from the railway yard delivering or picking up supplies. There were a few quarries – one at Top Road, Overton, and others on Overton Hill – and the need to transport the stone meant there were several horse-drawn haulage carts at the quarry every day. The numerous public houses in the town had to be supplied with beer from the breweries. The barrels were heavy and shire horses were required to haul such heavy loads. Then there were the carriers – men who transported goods made in Frodsham, or raw materials, on a regular basis to nearby towns. In 1860 White's Guide to Cheshire listed Thomas Nickson as a carrier ready to take goods from Church Street to Chester on Fridays and to Warrington on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Furthermore there were many farms in and around Frodsham and every farmer had several horses for ploughing, seeding, harvesting, hay-making and for sending his produce to market. Most of these horses were in need of regular shoeing. It is said that where there were metalled roads horses needed re-shoeing every four to five week: hence the importance of the blacksmith.

Nora Randles, who taught at the Frodsham Secondary School in the 1940s and 1950s, gave a remarkable description in her memoirs of the scene at the smithy in Church Street just before the First World War. But before her comments about the smithy she writes about her Granny Bibby and how, on her way to the Infants' School in a morning, she would double back to her grandmother's house because she would always be given a couple of tasty sweets. Then she continues her story as follows:

*“Her maiden name was Burkhill, born in Kingsley village. She had two brothers who kept the smithy in Church Street. It was situated opposite to the Girls' School, now the Parish Hall. It was a great attraction for the school children when they could watch the horses being shod. My Granny used to tell me how the boys would stand around the smithy door, the furnace would glow in the darkness as the man worked the bellows – they would take out the red hot iron shoe, plunge it in the cold tank of water and then it would be fitted to the horse's hoof. A cloud of acrid, smelly smoke would rise and then the nails would be knocked into the horny hoof. The horse would be led out looking quite proud of his new shoes as his owner led him away down the street.”*

Besides shoeing horses another job the blacksmith often did was to make wheels for carts and wagons. Nora Randles in her memoirs stated that before the railway bridge was built in Church Street the smith made good use of the stream that flowed down Red Lane and Church Street. He fixed the iron rims, red hot from the forge, round the wooden wheels and plunged them under the water. In this way the iron rim contracted under the cold water so it fitted tightly on to the wheel. Another line of business for the blacksmith used to be ornamental ironwork, especially railings and gates. Most of the large houses in Fluin Lane, Carriage Drive and Howey Lane had their elaborate gates at the entrance. One of the Nield smithies made the handsome iron gates in Church Entry at the Parish Church of St Laurence.

Another type of work undertaken was the making of fine ironwork signs for many of the public houses and hotels. Joseph Nield made the inn signs for the Bulls Head at Overton and the signs for the Golden Lion and the Cholmondeley Arms in Frodsham. Shaping the decorative pieces which make up the surrounding part of the sign and then welding them together must have required a lot of skill on the part of the blacksmith. In an article in the (Warrington) “Guardian” Special the reporter stated that Jack Nield *“has made a great number of ornamental lamps, both of the hanging and standard type, and these are now in churches and houses all over the country and there are two of them in Frodsham Parish Churchyard.”*



Image FD02298, 1906 Thomas Nield's smithy was on the railway station side of Church Street opposite the National School for Girls. The owner, Thomas, is third from the right.



Image FD 01121 Joseph Nield's smithy was situated behind the wooden shops next to the Grand Cinema in Church Street (image, page 14) and adjacent to the railway embankment behind, c.1910. Joseph is standing in the entrance to the forge. The man with the child is Jack Nield, who carried on the business after Joseph retired.

*Postscript: I would like to thank Mr David W Nield for his help with this article. ARS.*

# WILLIAM CHARLES COTTON

Michael Freedman

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I became a bee-keeper in 1972, a most beautiful and rewarding craft. I was taught mainly by a retired miner in Northumberland, but purchased a few books to enhance my learning process. I have always been a keen collector of various things, it is something one does or does not. A few years into my bee-keeping, I stumbled across a copy of Reverend John Thorley's *Melisselogia* or, *The Female Monarchy*. This was dated 1744, and inspired me to commence collecting books on bee-keeping of which up to 1900, 419 are listed in *British Bee Books 1500-1976*. As a lover of bees, wonderful, creative creatures, the works of William Charles Cotton figured highly on my wants list for my collection. In 1842 he wrote his *My Bee Book*, an instructive and entertaining work, containing as it does extracts from earlier writers on bees, which included John Thorley.

His theme throughout is to argue against the cruel practice of suffocating the bees to obtain their honey. His motto is *Never Kill a Bee*. This is emblazoned over his smaller earlier works, a *Short and Simple Letter to cottagers* from a conservative beekeeper. This was published in 1837 while Cotton was secretary of the Oxford Apiarian Society. It was enlarged and reissued in 1838, copies are now very rare, so I consider myself fortunate to have tracked these down some years ago. Cotton went to New Zealand in 1842, as part of Bishop Selwyn's team. He tried to introduce bees and bee keeping to the inhabitants to benefit all those living there, be they Maori or settlers.

He wrote *A Manual for New Zealand Bee Keepers*, which was published in Wellington in 1848. Original copies of this are few and far between, so when I was offered one a few years ago, I snapped it up excitedly. I was thrilled that it had been dedicated by the author to a friend in 1854, so knowing that the great man had handled this volume gave me a spiritual uplift and a further closeness to one of my great bee-keeping heroes.

From my early book collecting days of visits to bookshops and book fairs, the scope of hunting elusive works on my theme, has widened with the arrival of the World Wide Web, making it possible now to search from the comfort of home, book dealers all over the world.

I recently saw advertised a Scrap Book on beekeeping from a New Zealand dealer, which contained much manuscript, and articles on beekeeping, from 1837-1848, including the mention of Cotton. Since this was contemporaneous with Cotton's years of his writings, I was pleased to purchase this for a fairly modest sum. I had an optimistic intuition that this might be actually connected to Cotton, but then we all

have pipe dreams. It arrived a couple of weeks ago, and my excitement was immense, when I compared the script in my copy of the New Zealand Manual with the more extensive writings in this Notebook, one does not need to be a graphologist to notice that the hand is the same.

As my early eagerness to understand Cotton and his life better, I previously obtained a copy of Arthur Smith's detailed work on Cotton's life, "*William Charles Cotton MA Priest, Missionary and Bee Master, A turbulent life*".

From reading this, my understanding of Cotton and his life was greatly enlarged and informed, so I thought that I would consider myself fortunate if Arthur could confirm my own findings, as he has examined many letters in Cotton's hand rather than my short dedication.

I was thrilled to meet Arthur and his wife Kay and to show him my find. He had no hesitation in confirming my own belief, and so a previously unknown original work in Cotton's hand has emerged from the obscurity of a book dealer's stockroom, where I understand it had lain for very many years, to be a crowning addition to my own collection of great writings on bees by this extraordinary individual.

The work contains various excerpts from writers on beekeeping, including John Gabriel Stedman, Loudon, William Kirby, and Basil Hall. These are written in English and Greek, with a few words in Latin and one in Hebrew, which is Devorah, the Hebrew word for bee. His translation is "she that speaketh".

There are a number of his own original writings which are reproduced in his 1842 work as "extracts from my own notebook" In addition there is a complete copy of his Short and Simple Letter, printed on large paper, only 25 of these were printed and items relating to the Oxford Apiarian Society, formed to promulgate knowledge and practice in beekeeping and of which he was the secretary.

How wonderful for this to come together with a beloved collection of Cotton's bee writings. It will be treasured, much loved and cared for.

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# PRINCE WARIBO: NEW LINKS WITH THE FAMILY OF FRODSHAM'S 'BLACK PRINCE'

Heather Powling

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December 2014 brought new links with the descendants of King Jaja of Opobo - the father of Prince Waribo, buried in the graveyard of St Laurence Parish Church. There has long been local interest in the background of the Nigerian Prince who was sent to England to be educated in 1881. A chance phone call to the Vicarage enquiring about a family grave revealed that descendants of King Jaja of Opobo, Prince Waribo's father, are currently working on a book about King Jaja. So Jaja, descended from the house of King Jaja's first wife, Queen Osunju, visited Frodsham and brought with him pictures and information about King Jaja's life, the clans and Chieftain Houses of Opobo, all of which provided a context for what we already knew about Prince Waribo.

Arthur Smith's books 'Discovering Frodsham's Old Schools' and 'Brief Lives' both tell the story of how Prince Waribo was placed into the care of palm oil trader Walter Johnstone and brought to England. We know about the school to which he came, that he died in April 1882 after picking up a respiratory infection, and how local people came out to watch the funeral procession when he died. We know very little about the background from which he came, nor did we know that much of the story had been lost to the Jaja dynasty themselves.



Prince Waribo – picture courtesy of [frodshamhistoricimages.co.uk](http://frodshamhistoricimages.co.uk)



Prince Waribo's grave in St Laurence graveyard



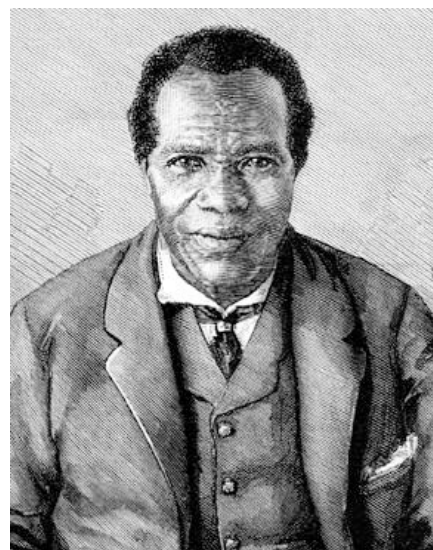
The inscription on the Prince's grave gives his name as 'WARABO SON OF KING JA JA OF OPOBO AFRICA'. We understand, now, however, that his name should more properly be spelled 'Waribo' meaning 'Guardian of the House'. The spelling on his grave may be a literal transcription of the sound to English speakers of the day.

The story of the prince's presence in a small private school in Frodsham begins with Britain's trading interests in Nigeria. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a trade was built up with coastal communities in the Niger Delta, exchanging manufactured domestic goods and liquor from Britain originally with timber, elephant ivory and slaves from the interior, but later, when slavery was abolished, with palm oil grown by inland communities.

The Chiefs of coastal communities acted as intermediaries between the European traders and the people of the interior. They guarded their rights jealously, and were not allowed to trade outside their agreed 'zones of interest'.



The Niger Delta in the 19th century (Wikipedia)



King Jaja of Opobo in Western dress © Corbis

Jaja, born in 1821, was kidnapped at the age of 12 by slave traders and was taken to the Kingdom of Bonny. He was taken into the Opubo Annie Pepple House (whose Head was an ex-slave, Maduka - or Madu-Annie Pepple). He was trained to work in the trading workhouse, first as a 'pull-away' boy (canoe paddler) and then as a trade learner whose job it was to go up the river with the House trading agents to the fairs in the interior. By the 1850s he was trading on behalf of the House as an agent. He gained a reputation as a successful leader and built up a considerable personal fortune, but his humble origins were a cause for concern. Social mobility had existed in Bonny for some time and amongst the population of the day there were many freed slaves. Europeans were surprised to find that some ex-slaves were Head Chiefs in the region (like Madu). By the 1870s, after a struggle amongst the Pepple House Chiefs of Bonny, Jaja broke away from them and established a new settlement named Opobo. He became King of Opobo in 1873.

As King, Jaja established a number of clan houses, including a Chieftain House for Cookey Gam, his political advisor and for the first of his thirteen wives, Queen Aya

Ngobonimiagh Osunju, from whom So Jaja and his family are descended. He had learned English in Bonny. In Opobo he lived in a European style house and employed an American teacher, Emma Johnson (nee White) to teach his young children. Today, there are 67 Houses, or family compounds in Opobo. Each is a collection of residences of connected family members of the Opobo nobility. From So, we learned that in Opobo, women do not assume chieftaincy roles but Jaja created a Chieftain House for Queen Osunju. This House remains the only one ever established for a woman in Opobo Town. It was an extension of King Jaja's palace throughout the 1870s and 1880s. As late as the 1950s, King Jaja's flag was hoisted in front of Queen Osunju House during annual festivities. The most senior elder of the House is not called a Chief, but carries the following titles - Ama Opu Senibo or Jeki Opu Senibo. So Jaja's father has both titles before his name. Due to illness, he no longer represents the House as the Chairman at the seat of King Jaja Executive Authority in Opobo Town, but he is still the elder - most senior - member of the House and remains a member of the Executive Authority.

King Jaja's children are listed as Prince Saturday and Prince Albert, Prince Eugene, Princess Nai, Prince Waribo and Prince Frederick Sunday. There is some uncertainty about the House from which Waribo's mother (not Queen Osunju) came. So Jaja believes that Prince Waribo's mother lived in the King Jaja House. For various reasons Saturday seems to have shown himself to be quite unsuitable to follow his father as King. It is therefore possible that, in sending Waribo to England, Jaja may have recognised him as the crown prince who would succeed him.

Of all Jaja's children, Waribo is the one about whom very little was known in the oral traditions of Opobo. It is, however, known that Jaja had founded a free school in Opobo in 1874 and Waribo is likely to have received his early education there prior to being sent to school here in Frodsham. Emma Johnson, the African American lady, born in Kentucky who emigrated to Liberia and from there was recruited by King Jaja, was governess to the King's children. She also taught at the school and maintained the King's business and private correspondence, as well as appearing at Queen Osunju's social occasions and becoming one of her trusted aides.

So why Frodsham? One of the trading companies trading palm oil with King Jaja was that of Couper, Johnstone & Co. of Glasgow. Their representative in the early 1880s was Walter Johnstone fifth of seven children of the Revd James Barbour Johnstone, a Free Church minister in the parish of Hobkirk, Scotland. It was to Walter Johnstone that King Jaja entrusted the education of Prince Waribo.

The Johnstone family - the Revd James and his wife Mary seem to have been a family of intrepid travellers. Our Walter Johnstone's grandfather (also Walter) had twice travelled to Prince Edward Island with a view to emigrating, and Walter's brother James Carlyle Johnstone was also a West African Trader. The Revd James, his wife, and their children appear on the 1851 Scottish census living at the Free Church Manse, Wolflee (a small hamlet in the parish of Hobkirk). After the death of his first wife in 1860, the Revd James moved to St John's Presbyterian Church in Warrington and it was in Cheshire that he married his second wife, Janet Stavert, in Altrincham in 1868.



Walter does not appear on a UK census return after 1861 - possibly because he spent much of his time abroad. However, we do know that he married Amelia Cunningham Fairlie. She was born in Langholm in Scotland, but her family also moved to Warrington and were living there in 1871.

We know little of the details of Walter Johnstone's visits to Opobo, but So Jaja has quoted for us an account of a reporter's visit to Opobo in the early 1880s when Mr Walter Johnstone was amongst the party visiting. The reporter accurately describes his location - he was within the confines of King Jaja House (the compound). The reporter and members of his party then proceeded towards a house adjoining Jaja's private residence where they were received in the porch by one of King Jaja's wives, whom we believe may have been Prince Waribo's mother. The report states:

*'She is not in good health, and therefore does not join in the festivities, but she anxiously inquires from one of our party who has recently arrived from England and has charge of her son Saturday at school there, how the boy is. The poor woman cries as she thinks she may never see him again.'* Note that he names Waribo "Saturday" in error. We know that Saturday was never sent to school in England.

Walter Johnstone and Amelia had five children: Archibald, Mary, Amelia, James and Annie. Whilst her husband was abroad, Amelia lived at Bothwell, Lanarkshire, and on the 1881 census is described as the wife of a West African merchant. Walter Johnstone died in 1884 (just two years after the young prince he had brought to Frodsham). After his death, Amelia and her children moved to Glasgow and then in 1904 we find them travelling by ship to Bulawayo in Natal, though the ship's log does not give us any clue about why they were on their way to South Africa.

Contemporary with the Revd James Johnstone in his ministry in Scotland was the Revd Robert Pringle Borwick, born in Orkney, but, by the 1860s, living in the parish of Glencairn in Dumfriesshire. Then, by 1881 the Revd Borwick had moved to Cheshire and become Boarding School Proprietor of Manor House School, Frodsham, run with the help of his daughter, Euphemia C Borwick and his nieces Agnes B and Isabella Melross (Mrs Borwick was a Melross).

This connection meant that Walter Johnstone brought Prince Waribo to an English school known and recommended by his father, and so he came to Frodsham.

When Waribo died, his younger brother, Prince Frederick Sunday was sent to Scotland to be educated and it was he who was eventually to become ruler of Opobo.

As for King Jaja, during the 1880s he regulated trade and raised duties in his area but this brought him into conflict with the British, who were beginning to extend their own control over the area. He sent a deputation to London in September 1887, which included his son, Prince Frederick Sunday (now heir, after the death of Prince Waribo) and his trusted adviser, Cookey Gam in an attempt to resolve the crisis in Opobo, but without success. Backed by the presence of a British gunboat, HMS Goshawk, the British representative Henry Johnston issued Jaja with an ultimatum: he must either surrender or be pursued and his kingdom attacked. Preferring to maintain his kingdom intact, Jaja was escorted to the gunboat to be taken for trial.

There were many, including Alexander Miller of Miller Brothers with extensive trading rights in the Niger Delta, who felt that the trial was unfair. Johnston had pursued a personal vendetta with Jaja. Nevertheless, Jaja, accompanied by Prince Frederick Sunday and three attendants, was deported to the island of Grenada and then on to St Vincent in the West Indies in 1888. Prince Frederick Sunday subsequently returned to continue his education in the UK. Jaja's health deteriorated and in early 1891, and he was allowed to return home on condition that he would be loyal to Her Majesty and her representatives in Opobo. In March 1891, he moved to Barbados and from there was to continue to Opobo. Sadly, he died before he could reach Opobo. He was initially buried in Tenerife, but later exhumed and re-patriated to Opobo. Jaja had not been able to halt British ambitions in Nigeria and after his removal the way was set for the development of British colonialism in the area.

Chance enquiries often lead to some of the most interesting avenues of historical research. The story of Prince Waribo's grave has proved no exception and we look forward to ongoing contact with his family.



So Jaja pictured during his visit to St Laurence Church in December 2014

#### References:

1. Arthur R Smith 1994 *Discovering Frodsham's Old Schools - an Illustrated History*:
2. Arthur R Smith 2012 *Brief Lives*
3. Map sources: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)
4. Information on the family of Walter Johnstone from census and other records [www.Ancestry.co.uk](http://www.Ancestry.co.uk)
5. Information on King Jaja and the royal household of Opobo from personal communications with So Jaja during 2015.

*The editors would like to thank So and his family for sharing with us so much of the history of Opobo and the background from which Prince Waribo came.*

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# FRODSHAM NEWS ITEM 1881

The email below was sent to the Hon. Secretary, Frodsham & District History Society, by Paul Cox on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2015. Paul was researching his own area of interest (Woburn Sands in Bucks) when he came across this article in the **Leighton Buzzard Observer and Linslade Gazette** – dated Tuesday 02 August 1881.

The photographs, belonging to our Society, have been added. They were all taken some 20 years after the event, but little will have changed and they serve to illustrate the setting.

**ADVENTURES OF A WIFE HUNTER –**

The main street of the usually quiet village of Frodsham a few days ago presented quite a lively scene, in which a Liverpool clerk formed a prominent figure. It appeared that a lady saw an advertisement in a certain paper stating that a gentleman, about 30 years of age, was in want of a wife. She decided to carry on a correspondence with him for the sake of the fun which might result. The advertiser fell into the snare, and on Saturday afternoon the hero of the tale made an appointment to meet the brother of his charming correspondent at Frodsham railway station. He duly arrived, and was received by a gentleman occupying a somewhat prominent position in the district, who deluded his unfortunate victim into entering the well-known hostelry, “The Bear’s Paw”. Here they found the company of jovial spirits, who at once began to chaff the lover. The fun waxed fast and furious, and a large crowd assembled outside, many of whom had provided themselves with a plentiful supply of flour and soot for the purpose of punishing the adventurer if he did not accede to their wishes that he should stand treat. Some of the young men in the hotel assaulted him in a way which caused him to become very violent, and, pulling out a pistol, he predicted that if he were molested there would be another tragedy to record in the newspapers, as he would put a bullet in the first fellow who touched him. However, during a moment when the gentleman was off his guard, the weapon was snatched from him, and a roar of laughter went up from his tormentors upon finding that it was not loaded. The company agreed to make terms if their victim would stand a case of champagne, but he absolutely refused to do this, and was ultimately allowed to make his escape on putting down a sovereign.



c06156 Frodsham Railway Station



FD0333 The Butter Market with gable ends of the Bear’s Paw on the left & the station a short distance to the right



FD00082 The Bear’s Paw

All three photographs were taken c.1900 & may be found online at:  
[frodshamhistoricimages.co.uk](http://frodshamhistoricimages.co.uk)

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# ROCK HOUSE, HIGH STREET, REMEMBERED

John Miller

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I was born in November 1912 in the house called Ty Gwyn, now the Old Hall Hotel in Main Street, Frodsham.



Ty Gwyn in the early 1900s

My father was Rudolf Edward Miller (originally Weissmuller) and my mother Alice Emily Linaker, daughter of Charles Edward Linaker and Alice Emily (nee Rigby) of Rock House, 48 High Street, Frodsham. The Linakers were land agents for several large estates in North Cheshire, including Aston by Sutton. Grandfather Linaker was born in Aston by Sutton, but they moved to Frodsham, where he became well known and was active on committees in the local community. He was Chairman of the Parish Council from 1912 and 1915.



Image FD02490, 1897

My parents were married in 1906 and I was their youngest child.





Rock House, 1913

The photograph shows the Linaker family pictured by the conservatory at Rock House. My parents are on the left with me (the baby!) and my brother Rudolf.

At the start of the First World War we had to leave Frodsham and move to Fleetwood when my father was put in charge of a large building which provided materials for the armed forces. He had managed a large soap factory in Widnes and was therefore asked to take on the management of supplies for the war effort. It was at this point that he came home from London one day and told us that we would now be known as 'Miller'.

I was five and a half years old when we returned to Frodsham and went to live with my mother's parents at Rock House. My mother was always interested in nursing, and requested permission to start a nursing home at Rock House. This was granted and the home became very popular. The number of women who came to the home to give birth to their babies was incredible – the four bedrooms were never empty – it seems that births were always taking place! The home had three nurses – two during the daytime and one at night. Patients came in first for medical attention. The two surgeries were either side of Rock House.

My grandfather died in September 1928 and my grandmother in 1934. The nursing home was still in existence at the time of the Second World War, but as the War progressed changes occurred. Eventually the home had to be closed because the nurses were being called up for war duties. My mother had great regrets about this. My father died in 1951 and my mother in 1960.

As the house became empty we put it up for sale in 1962 and it was sold for £5000 at auction. The garden was so large that eventually a house and a bungalow were built in it.

*Note: the content of this article was initiated by Brian Dykes who was born at Rock House and its finished form results from an informal discussion over a cup of tea with the editors.*

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## PARISH CHURCH RESTORATION

Heather Powling

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Like so many historic buildings, St Laurence Parish Church, Frodsham, has suffered wear to its structure over time and the last five-yearly architects' report revealed a need for extensive restoration. A successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, together with fundraising and donations from Frodsham people meant that the work could go ahead early in 2015.

In the course of the work, the builders uncovered medieval carvings which may date from the original twelfth century building, but which are now hidden from view by later alterations to the roof line.



This gargoyle, together with carved and dated initials from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early years of the twentieth century, was amongst the discoveries.

The building work on the church was completed in time for a celebration of St Laurence Day on 9<sup>th</sup> August. To meet the terms and conditions of the grant, the church has plans for more flexible use of this important landmark and Frodsham's only Grade I listed building for the greater benefit of the whole community. New display equipment, tables and chairs have been acquired so that the internal space can accommodate a wide variety of events.

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# ARCHIVE STOP PRESS!

Kath Hewitt

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Earlier this spring, I had a phone call from Mr. Steve McEntees, which prompted the start of an unexpected project.

Steve was a Frodsham History Group Committee member in the 1980s and wished to pass on a very large bundle of Dr. Dodd's hand drawn maps which had been in his loft for over twenty years. These maps include Town and Lordship enclosures, field ownerships, mills and spring levels - some from as early as 1086.

He visited the archive room and felt that the index of books, documents, maps, posters, acquisitions, Journals, Dr. Dodd's slides and the Flower Cottage Coat discovery, should be on-line and accessible to the wider public. So he suggested this very exciting website project.

The challenges of an archival website were discussed before I accepted his very generous offer to place much of the material on-line. This would be a welcome addition to the existing pink hardback A4 paper files and CDs at Castle Park House and Frodsham Library. So work began on the design of a website.

At the end of three months, we had an easily managed, readable and informative website. For those without a computer, the Library and Castle Park House have public machines and help would be given if needed, providing you take the link below with you.

Steve and I met with Sue Davy, co-archivist in the early years, and Joan Douglas, who was a committee member with Steve, to look at the completed website with new eyes, and celebrated with coffee and chocolate cake as soon as Steve said everything was fine!

The Frodsham 800 Poster is very interesting in that the individual art work can be enlarged once activated. It has been reproduced by John Hughes of the Photographic Society and with the agreement of Philip Holroyd and Mike Wass, the present Chair of Eddisbury Artists. I hope that you will find the Society's new archival website interesting and useful.

My grateful thanks go to Steve for the many, many hours of work he has put into this project for the benefit of Frodsham & District History Society.

[frodhistoryarchives.co.uk](http://frodhistoryarchives.co.uk)

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# FRODSHAM HERITAGE NEWS

Kath Gee

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Many of you will be aware of Heritage Open Days – an annual event that celebrates our architecture and culture by allowing free access to interesting and often historic properties. It began in 1994 as a Council of Europe initiative and 2015 is the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary. Chester has participated every year and has one of the largest programmes in the region. Chester Civic Trust and Cheshire West and Chester Council in association with local societies organise the opening and promotion of heritage properties, mainly in Chester. However, in 2013 and 2014 Frodsham was asked to contribute to the event by offering a Heritage Walking Tour – a different walk was offered on each of the last two heritage weekends.

This year, with a little more pre-planning, I gained agreement from the owners / managers of nine worthy properties in Frodsham and Overton to welcome drop-in visitors on some or all of the four Heritage Open Days: 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2015. Their details were placed in the Chester Heritage Open Days booklet and several hundred booklets were circulated from key places in Frodsham, e.g. the Library, Castle Park Arts Centre, at the September History Society meeting in Main Street Community Church and at the individual properties that had agreed to participate.

Several properties including Castle Park Arts Centre, the Ring o’Bells, the Bear’s Paw and the Queen’s Head found it was not easy to estimate and separate the number of Heritage Open Days visitors from other customers. However, the Old Hall Hotel, where visitors needed to pass the Reception Desk, estimated 20 interested Heritage Open Days visitors and some ‘refreshment business’. They were pleased with the result and believed it was ‘good for Frodsham’.

The Old Courthouse / Guiding HQ in Ship Street had 18 visitors during the Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and the Railway Stationmasters House / Hairdresser had shown round a ‘handful of visitors’ during their open-time on Saturday afternoon.

St Laurence Parish Church undoubtedly received the most visitors – a steady stream during Saturday, including a small group of Sandstone Trail walkers, and another steady flow of visitors on Sunday afternoon. 8 guides were available to offer tours of the church interior to individuals and small groups, and refreshments were available for visitors.

The Chester Heritage Open Days booklet also included the Main Street Community Church (the Iron Church / Tin Tabernacle), Castle Park and the Overton Hill War Memorial, but, at these sites there was no way of gauging Heritage Open Days visitor numbers.

Nevertheless, it was gratifying to hear that all participating properties were happy to be involved in future Heritage Open Days.

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# FRODSHAM & DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY

## Programme of Meetings 2016

All indoor meetings are held on Monday evenings at Main Street Community Church,  
Frodsham and start at 7.45 pm  
Membership £5.00 p.a. + £1.50 per meeting. Visitors £3.00

4 January	Thomas Hazelhurst, Prince of Methodism Dr Peter Vardy
1 February	Garments concealed within buildings Dr Dinah Eastop
7 March	AGM + Frodsham Castle: All the trappings of a medieval castle landscape, but where is the castle? Dr Rachel Swallow
4 April	Booking forms available for June visit History of the Chemical Industry in Runcorn and Widnes Dr Diana Leitch
12 May	Bodies in peat and ice: not for the squeamish Dr Jonathan Lageard
8 June (Wed)	Guided afternoon visit Organised by Kath Gee
5 September	Edgar Battersby, Edwardian Photographer Rupert Battersby
3 October	Reading the Wirral landscape Anthony Annakin-Smith
7 November	Family fortunes – the Astons of Aston and the Pickerings of Thelwall in the 18 <sup>th</sup> century Dr Mike Taylor
12 December	The Merchant Palaces of Liverpool Stephen Guy

Betty Wakefield, Programme Secretary, has arranged the meetings for 2016.

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